

# Women and Men in the Past

19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Century  
Additional Teaching Materials





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# **WOMEN AND MEN IN THE PAST**

## **19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Century**

*Additional Teaching Materials for Secondary Schools*

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**International Seminar for Balkan Studies and Specialization  
South-Western University, Blagoevgrad, 2002**

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Education

Work of Men, Work of Women

Politics and Emancipation

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Love and Marriage in Patriarchal Society

Love and Marriage in Bourgeois Society

Love and Marriage in Communist Society

### **Snezhana Dimitrova**

Body

Ideal Woman?

Leisure and Beauty in Modern Times



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## PREFACE

**T**he purpose of the issue is to develop students' curiosity to the history of people living in South East Europe. We approach the past not from the overall perspective of highest political peaks but from the perspective of everyday life of common people.

Many of today difficulties of women and men to communicate and understand each other, to find proper realization could be traced back into the past. We would like to teach young people to be more sensitive to the presence of past attitudes, values and stories into their lives. We would like to encourage them to seek better understanding of the others – the ones of opposite gender, of different age and nation

Approaching the history of gender relations in South East Europe, we would rather try to outline the common problems of people of Eastern countries than to present different national traditions. We put greater emphasis on the things that connect men and women – love, profession, and human dignity - than on the ones opposing them. Ideals of being “true” male and being “true” female vary in different social groups and change in the course of time. We behave “like a man” or “like a woman” not so much because of our biological specifics but because of certain social expectations and established traditions.

This book is the second one in the series of Additional history teaching materials. In 2001, “Childhood in the Past” was published by M. Ristović and D. Stojanović (Association for Social History, Belgrade). We would recommend also the academic volumes “Childhood in South East Europe”, Belgrade-Graz, 2001 and “Gender Relations in South Eastern Europe” Belgrade-Graz, 2002. All of the books were developed as part of the project “History and History Teaching in South East Europe” coordinated by Karl Kaser (Department for Southeast European History, University of Graz).\*

We hope that our book will bring young people closer to the various life worlds of the past and will contribute to better understanding and cooperation of the new generations of South East Europe.

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# Love and Marriage in Patriarchal Society



The wedding party was all kin and village event, Bulgaria, Kovachevica, 1910s

## Family and Kinship

When we talk about marriage, we put greater emphasis on the things that connect men and women than on the ones separating them – we talk about family, kinship, nation. Christian religion rejects polygamy and affirms the monogamous family – one husband and one wife bonded together in sacred matrimony forever. Later on, the monogamy model was also accepted by people of other religions (Islamic, Jewish) and in the 19<sup>th</sup> century it was predominant on the Balkans.

But what we today perceive as a typical family: a husband, a wife and two or three children living in a separate home, having their own budget and bonded by mutual love has

been an exception in the past. The family on the Balkans in the still patriarchal 19<sup>th</sup> century had been part of a bigger community – the husband's kin. Sometimes parents, their married sons with their wives and children and yet unmarried daughters used to live all together in one home and were working on one farm (so called “zadruga”). The extended families including several generations of direct and indirect relatives were characteristic more of the shepherd high-mountain regions of the Balkans (Montenegro, Albania, Kosovo) where they had survived the longest. The kin solidarity helped the complex organization of work, as well as the protection from outside attacks and robberies.

Often extended families were transitional



phenomena. Married sons especially after getting children used to seek for separate settlements and for their shares of the common land. Father was obliged to help his eldest son to build a house; only the youngest son was expected to live with his parents inheriting the family house as a reward for his taking care of the parents. Nevertheless living in separate, most often neighboring houses kin related families used to support each other. At the end of 19<sup>th</sup> century, the average size of households in Bulgaria was 5.6 people; families in Serbia were more extended – 8.6 people. A kind of family individualism was typical for Greece - new married couple used to move to their own house, which was often part of the dowry of the bride.

The choice of a spouse in the kin patriarchal family had not been so much personal but mostly the decision of the parents: a leading factor in taking this decision had been the diligence, amenability and wealth, all needed for the mutual work and survival.

Until World War I, a big part of the population of South-Eastern Europe had been rural and primarily agricultural (mostly in Serbia – 85% and least in Slovenia – 59%). The agricultural activities of men and women had been strictly divided, yet connected and close. The married couples expected their children to help them with the farming – 5-6 years old they were already included in the agricultural work.

With the exclamation “We have a boy-mower” or “We have a girl-harvester” the relatives used to announce the birth of a baby boy or a baby girl. Families used to have a lot of children (between 7 and 12) but there had also been a high mortality rate because of the harder living conditions and the lack of health care.

Romania and Yugoslavia had the biggest demographic increase during the 1930s: 35-31 children of 1000. In 1910 average rural fam-

ily in Bulgaria consisted of 6.1 members and urban one – of 4.5 members.

The age to get married had been low, especially for the girls: in Romania during the 1920s: 15 years of age for the girls, and in the wealthier town families – 18 years of age.

But life expectancy had been low, as well: in 1900 men in Hungary were expected to live for 36.6 years, and women a little longer – 38.2.

### **Patriarchal power, Common laws, Legislation**

Balkan proverbs claimed that “A woman without a husband is like an unbridled horse”; “Women are not worthy even to smell the places where men step”. Men were granted great power over women in the patriarchal family: women after getting married had to accept the husband’s family name and place of living; in case she had become a widow, she was not allowed to inherit any part of the



Scutari in 1901, Albania





Preparing the bride, Albania, Pavle Yovanovich, Croatian painter (1859 - 1931)

jointly acquired family property and goods; the wife could not be engaged in trade without the exclusive consent of her husband; the husband could insult and beat his wife; in cases of family arguments, the husband had the decisive word and a few cases advanced to the court; husbands were to represent women in court.

According to the Bulgarian laws of 1906 female children inherited twice as less property and cattle in comparison to male children, despite the fact that boys had often been sent to study and girls were to take care of the family property. Wives, however, kept in their possession the property that they had brought in the family after marriage, and could entirely dispose of it (even loan money, received from sold personal property, with an interest to their husbands).

In Serbia, according to the common law, the groom had to offer a ransom of 25 grosha

to the father of his bride. King A. Karađorđević issued a decree rejecting this law as "offending human dignity". According to the legislature of Serbia (1844 - 1945) daughters did not have the right to inherit their parents in case that there were male inheritors; widows did not have the right to inherit their husband's property – they had been allowed only to live in his lands until their death; in case of divorce, girls over 7 years and boys over 4 years of age belonged to the father, only children born out of wedlock belonged to the mother and she was not allowed to ask for legal recognition of fatherhood or money support. The common law tradition that daughters get small part of family property ("miraz") opposed for a long time the official legislation.

In Romania, the Constitution of 1886 adopted the Napoleon's civic code: women did not have any right of property (except in the



case they were widows without any son of full legal age). Women could not be represented in the court; they were not allowed to participate in taking important judicial decisions concerning the lives of their children (keeping them after a divorce or protecting them in the case of family abuse).

In Greece, property, name and reputation were also handed over from male to male, but there were other local practices: in some Aegean areas, girl used to inherit a house as a dowry; property and name were handed over in two directions: fathers to sons and mothers the daughters.

The status of women in patriarchal family was not permanent: most suppressed was the young wife until getting her first child (she had to work most and to obey all elder rela-

tives); while taking care of children wife was granted some rights. Becoming a grandmother, the woman achieved special privileges and could even established a kind of a matriarchat – some old women enjoyed smoking pipes and riding horses as men did. In Albania, when there was no male heir in family or close relative, one of the girls could achieve a status of a man – she had to swear to stay virgin and she was allowed to carry arms, dress and behave like a man (so called “muzhka zhena” ‘manly woman’).

### Engagement and Honor

The folklore of the Balkan people relates with nostalgia to the premarital courting, the passes made at girls at evening gatherings, about youth desires and love. But the decision for marriage was based not so much on the liking and love of the young couple, but the considerations of the parents. The shyness and chastity of the girls were highly valued – the virginity of the bride celebrated at the time of the wedding was promoted to guarantee the continuation of the husband’s kin, and the “dishonest” girls were publicly put to shame.

It was not common for a married couple to talk about love feelings and erotic desires. In everyday life discussing the needs of the body, especially sexual maturing of girls, pregnancy and birth has been considered sinful and nobody dared to attempt it. Sexual intercourse lead to pregnancy and birth, there was no education about body and pregnancy. Children were the biggest joy and support of their parents. Childless families were considered punished by God and deserving contempt. It was not accepted to talk about the erotic preferences and experiences, especially those of women. The exaggerated sexual power and desire of young bachelors was praised in songs, performed in special carnival occasions.



Peasant family, Macedonia, 1930s



# Sources

## 1. Picture of an American painter, "Her lord and master" (Albania)



Her lord and master, Caton Woodville, American painter (1856 - 1927)

### Analyze:

What event was represented on the painting.

Describe the differences in outlook appearance, expression and conduct of the husband and wife, of the boy and the girl.

What were the relations between men and women in the represented family?

Was the American painter's vision realistic or romantic?

## 2. Travel Notes (Bosnia, 19<sup>th</sup> century)

"According to the Turkish customs, a woman cannot approach the court by herself, but has to appoint a man to represent her. In a

conversation between men, it is shameful to ask someone about his wife's or his daughters' health. The man is ashamed to mention his wife's name when talking about her, and calls her "my one". It was not only Muslim women who were going out of their homes with a covered face and body, but also the Christian and the Jewish ones. It was not considered appropriate for a woman to pass through the square alone. Christian girls went to church only once – for the Holy Communion. This was a typical situation for the women in the towns where Turkish customs were strong.

It was different in the villages. The woman could be the head of the family as well as in charge of a village cooperative farm. From the names of some of these women came the second names of their children – Marichi 'the child of Mari', Katichi, 'the child of Kati', etc. All the property belonged to the family cooperative farm and women could have their own share of it and dispose of it as they think appropriate. According to the Turkish land laws a woman who is a daughter, a wife or a mother could inherit the land, which was possessed by her father, husband or son before their death, and she even received a document for that. Christian women in the villages did not cover their faces, and in some regions neither did the Muslim women."

V. Skarić, "Turkish customs in social life"; In "Selected works", book 2.

\* \* \*

"We learned that polygamy was not widespread in these regions. By the way, it seems that it is dying out in the other Turkish regions, but it has never been rooted in here. As a rule, the rich Bosnia men have only one woman."

A. Evans. "Walking through Bosnia and Herzegovina in August and September 1875".

V. Maslesh, Sarajevo, 1973.



### Answer the questions:

1. Why had women in the villages been more independent than women in towns?
2. Why did not polygamy get rooted in the Balkans?

### Find out

Examples in history, literature, folklore of strong “manly” women in the patriarchal times: heads of family, outlaws, and others.

### 3. Travel notes (Bosnia, 19<sup>th</sup> century)

“While accompanying the Russian Gilferding, a Bosnian man exclaimed loudly: “Beautiful girl!” To the surprised foreigner the man from Sarajevo answered: “What do you mean, why, Don’t you see: The golden coins on her neck will be enough for the rest of my life!” There is one more peculiarity of women’s beauty that inspires Bosnia men. This is “fatness”. The beautiful girl and the fat girl are one and the same thing.”

A. Evans. “Walking through Bosnia...”, 1973.

### 4. Love folk songs (Bulgaria)

“My Mom and Dad to see  
What sweetheart I love  
At waist – thin poplar  
Her face – fresh cheese  
Her eyes – black cherries  
Her eyebrows – wheat cords  
Her mouth – a silver cup  
Her tongue – sells sugar.”

\* \* \*

“When she went for water  
her face was shining like the sun  
when she came back from the spring  
her breasts were jumping  
like the fish in the Vardar river  
like Thessaloniki lemons.”

### Comment:

Children in the village had usually slept in one and the same room with their parents and had witnessed their intimate relations; they had also witnessed the sexual intercourse of the animals of which they took care at a very young age. That is why the young people’s attitude towards the body and the erotic desires was more relaxed in comparison to that of the youths from the town, for whom the body and its desires had been a taboo or had been discussed in a rather romantic fashion.

### Answer the questions:

1. What images were used to describe the girl’s attractiveness? Why? What metaphors would you use today?
2. Was the song talking about love or about attraction?
3. Which of the qualities of the beloved were valued the most?
4. Were the descriptions of the beloved in these songs expressions of obscenity or body spontaneity?
5. Why did folk love songs usually describe women’s attractiveness and rarely that of men?



## Compare:

Folklore love songs with this town love song from the beginning of the century:

*"I was drinking red wine yesterday evening  
and there was not a drop left  
And sweaty forehead I wiped  
yesterday evening in Ana's curls  
I wouldn't desire even the Sultan's daughters  
When Ana's kiss is burning on my lips  
If there were a charmer I would stand before him  
And ask for three things, the first being Ana  
Go away daylight, come desired night  
Because I have a date with my darling Ana."*

What is the difference in the images and the suggestions?

## Mark the true statements. Back up your choice:

- In rural patriarchal society young people did not have eminent romantic love feelings, but pragmatic "gastronomical" desires.
- It was not accepted to talk about romantic feelings in patriarchal society even if they existed.
- The individual expression in patriarchal society was restricted by a number of traditional language formulas.
- Health and wealth rather than feelings and beauty were important in patriarchal society.
- Beauty was valued in patriarchal society; however the notions of beauty were different.

## Find out

Several folklore love songs and analyze their language. Describe the perfect girl and the perfect boy according to folklore. Can you point out examples of romantic idealizations of the love feeling, characteristic of West-European knight poetry?

## 5. Woman oral autobiography

(Bulgaria)

"Our mother taught us to weave, to knit, to cook... She told us nothing about these, girls' things. I was 18 years old when my first menstruation came. And my mother understood because I was washing... She may have worried but she didn't ask me. Rags, cloths, we folded them and there. We were ashamed of menstruation at that time, not like now..."

During the first wedding night they close us there in the cellar and when the groom does his work, he goes out, calls the godmother to come and see that you are honest. In the cellar, where else, all were closed there. Cleaned, wiped, on a straw-mat, what else? Only for some time, until the work is done. I had gone to him and had slept with him two weeks be-



Poor family, 1920s, Bulgaria  
(Blagoevgrad history museum)





Happy grandmother, Bulgaria

## 6. Story of a British traveler in Albania (1909)

“A man is responsible, too, for his guest, and must avenge a stranger that has spent but one night beneath his roof, if on his journey next day he be attacked. The sacredness of the guest is far-reaching. A man who brought me water from his house, that I might drink by the way, said that I now ranked as his guest, and that he should be

bound by his honor to avenge me should anything happen to me before I had received hospitality from another. [...] A woman is never liable for blood-vengeance, except in the rare case of her taking it herself. But even then there seems to be a feeling that it would be very bad form to shoot her. I could not hear of a recent case. I roused the greatest horror by saying that a woman who commits a murder in England is by law liable to the same punishment as a man”.

\* \* \*

“Marriage is arranged entirely by the head of the house. The children are betrothed in infancy or *in utero*. Even earlier. A man will say to another with whom he wishes to be allied, “When your wife has a daughter I want her for my son”[...] The girl may - but it requires much courage on her part - refuse to marry the man. In that case she must swear before witnesses to remain a virgin all her life ...No man may strike a woman but her husband – or, if she be unmarried, her father. To do so entails blood. A woman in the mountains, in spite of the severe work she is forced to do, is in many ways freer than the women in Scutari. She speaks freely to the men; is often very bright and intelligent, and her opinion may be asked and taken.”

E. Durham (1863 – 1944). *High Albania*, 1909.

fore, but we had protected each other.[...]

[...] While we are young we were doing these things – every night, then, as you grow old, at 30, when you have children, your cares are only for them. He hasn’t wanted me in the field. [...]

[...] “My mother had a lot of abortions – probably over 10. She was visiting an old woman that did it with a goose feather, she pierced her, and then she used to come home and wait. She was covered with blood, couldn’t move because of weakness. We, the girls, changed her clothes and looked after her as if she was a child”.

Oral autobiography, a woman from the village of Teshovo, 76 years old, recorded by A. Pashova in 1993.

### Answer the questions:

1. Whose was the initiative for sexual intercourse in the family? Who felt responsible for the unwanted pregnancy and suffered the consequences of that?

2. Why had women felt old at 30 years of age?

3. Was the first wedding night an unforgettable personal experience for the married couple?

4. Was the interviewed woman criticizing the existing patriarchal order or was she expressing her support?



## Comment:

In general, in every family in the countryside husband enjoyed an unrestricted power not only over family wealth but also over family members. He was entitled to sell and buy, exchange and donate and manage the money of his family. He controlled every aspect of his family. All this power derived from his ownership of all the family wealth. Because of his absolute power he was known as the “head of the house” and the rest of the family members known as the “family serves”.

All the efforts of the head of the family were

not have children or could have only females the head of house decided that the son could have a second or even a third wife.”

A. Dijaka, “*Marriage in Albania*”, Tirana, 1983.

## Fill in the table:

*Roles and relationships in the Albanian patriarchal family*

Husband	
responsibilities	rights
Wife	
responsibilities	rights

## Answer the questions:

1. Why did men have so much responsibilities in the traditional Albanian society?

2. What was considered to be “man’s honor”? And what was considered to be “woman’s honor”?

3. The price of the male protection of women was women’s full subordination. What would you prefer for yourself – greater security or greater freedom?

## Chose the right answers:

Which are the three basic reasons that lead to the preservation of patriarchal family relationships in the Albanian society till the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Support your choice.

- The political dependence of Albania – 5 centuries of Ottoman rule (until 1912) that lead to the preservation of the feudal relations regarding possession and production.

- Peculiarities of the traditional culture – the male cult toward the weapon and the custom of blood revenge.

- Economic underdevelopment – lack of industry; main source of livelihood for the population remained the primitive high-mountain stock - breeding.

- Predominant mountain relief, impeding the



Father with his children, Gramada village, Bulgaria, 1920s

aimed at the strengthening of the economic and social position of his family, increasing family wealth and family labor force. The family labor force was maintained by encouraging marriages and not allowing the sons to live separately with their new families. In cases when any of the young wives could



construction of good transportation infrastructure and effective state institutions – court, police, schools, municipalities.

- The influence of the traditional for the Muslims Sheriat marital law and the allowed polygamy (up to 3 women).
- The predominant part of the population was ignorant.
- As compensation to the humiliations suffered during the centuries of political dependence and poor life, men on the Balkans have developed a particular cult towards honor and heroism.

## 7. Pedagogical and medical proscriptions of erotic behavior

‘I felt that onanism had crept into the school because one of my pupils rushed out of the classes as he was crazy and after that he was always sick and suffering to death. Just imagine in how many town and villages of Bulgaria this sickness, this destructive passion, has sneaked into and nobody is even plan-

ning to root it out.”

S. Dobroplodny, Bulgarian pedagogue, 1845; In:

“The wheel of life” Rajna Gavrilova, 1999.

“This mistake (the masturbation) dries out and ruins the bodies of children, pregnant and other women. It causes weakening of the waist, the eyes and the hole body as well; impotence, spasms, trembling of the arms and the legs, epilepsy, apoplexy and death at the end. (Cold showers, red wine and valerian are recommended as remedies).

Greek practical medicine, 1845.

### Answer the questions:

1. Why did the religious prohibition of masturbation as mortal sin start to be supported up by pedagogical and medical arguments at the end of 19 century?
2. Why children born out of wedlock, childless families and masturbation were considered to be the hardest misfortunes in patriarchal societies.
3. What are the modern attitudes to these phenomena?



Big family, 1920s, Bulgaria



# Body

History is not only the history of political facts and the history of thoughts but also the history of our human bodies. The history of the body is the history of the adventures of our body as a place of pain and desire, happiness and grief. It is the history of the society's rules and prohibitions, which, through specifically developed social rites and certain language forms, make the individual of a given specific historic time to overcome and cultivate all emotions and fevers associated with shame, awkwardness and fear.



The history of the body is a history of ruling norms and taboos in society, it is a history of fashion: the norm imposed on the body by the society in order the differences of the social hierarchy to get fixed, so as there was control on the relations between the sexes in such a way that individuals were aware of the limitations imposed over the exposure of their bodies in public places and private life.

The history of the body is also a history of laws: these concerning labor regulations which imposed such limitations that led to excluding women from certain working places and definite professions, those regulating leisure time and the healthful conditions of work; such concerning the prohibition or allowance of abortions, violence and crime against women and men. By the implementation of all these laws the state regulates the relations between sexes and thus is able to control the individual's attitude toward body. As a consequence, the history of the body is also the history of institutions such as marriage, family, army, school etc., which impose the ruling values which

discipline the body in terms of the norms and attitudes of the time.

The history of the body is a history of the images and the conceptions of masculinity and femininity of society, through which it creates the ideals of physical beauty and morality, the principles of "right" and "wrong" in order to regulate the social relations between sexes as a basis of the order and progress in society and the state. It is a history of the ways in which illnesses and epidemics



change the attitude towards the body, rearrange group's and individual's perceptions of the sex so that the healthy body and the demographic balance turn up to become basic values of the society and state.

The history of the body is a history of the manner in which scientific consciousness defines it as a biological organism, and the medicine encourages the creation of the public ideal of "beauty" through determining what is "healthy" and what is "ill", focusing rather on morality values than clinical categories. It is a history of the concept of the body as a place of pain (birth, wounds, death...) and of the will for overcoming it, beginning with sports that should temper and discipline it.

The history of the body shows how and why it becomes a place not only for biologically but also for publicly formed instincts. Let us try together to outline some of the features of this process in South East Europe. Here the body is exposed to the influence of the public norms and ideology of the patriarchal, bourgeois and communist society. They are united by the commonly shared idea that a civilized individual is the one, who holds its desires within the borders, outlined by the community. In the following sections we shall try to identify these borders.

### Men and Women in Everyday Life

In the 19 century there were a lot of limits imposed on female body appearance and behavior in the village culture and the early artisan city. They aimed at preserving the patriarchal sexual morality as a condition for a safe life and social stability. The patriarchal people associated their views of the stability in the society and of the safety of life with the durability of the family and the smoothness of marriage. The traditional values were more concentrated on aspects that depended on the notion of a happy family:

*"To love, to have a house and to set up a home is one of our best national features. The Bulgarian youngsters did not like to scape-grace; everyone thought to start a family on time and settle in his own house; to take care of the house was pride for both the man and the woman. Marriage was sacred and holy, and celibacy was something almost unknown in Motherland".*

Newspaper "Patriot" (28.02.1889) did not approve of the newly appearing negative attitude towards marriage among the young people of educated urban classes .

We can get insights about the character and essence of "happy" matrimonial life and "family understanding" which illustrated the rhythm of urban everyday life in South East Europe from different sources (village stories, people's memoirs etc.). Lots of descriptions show that the idea of an "unhappy" marriage didn't exist.

Divorces were an exception rather than a rule because adulteries did not exist and there were



Peasant woman, Hungary



no family crises, because of wife's adulteries. Happy family life was of moral value and it was achieved because there were rarely violent quarrels at home as wives had to listen to their husbands and they did not reproach when their husbands were angry. Wives should respect their husbands' status and put up with their financial stability. These pictures depicted the "harmony" in matrimonial life, existing despite the fact that the marriage was often the result of parents' desire, which was accepted as a law and where the longings of the heart were neglected.

Everyday behavior in public places and in private life was also controlled. These restrictions were meant to "protect" the woman in the patriarchal world from every temptation, which could push her off the track of her basic role of mother, housewife, sexual partner and moral supporter of the husband in the family. The regulations of women's behavior in the 19 century included:

- A woman was not allowed to look other men in the eyes,
- A woman was not allowed to talk to a man on the street without a witness, except if the man was her close relative,
- A woman was obliged to talk to her husband with bent head and always to listen to him.

- What did "happy family" mean to the patriarchal people?
- Guess what other restrictions could have been imposed on women's behavior in public places?
- What might happen to women who did not follow all these restrictions?

Here are examples of women who did not follow these social norms. Let's see what happened to these disobedient women:

**Source 1.** "Grandmother Nedelya was a teacher in Prilep (Macedonian town,) during the period 1886-1887. Her free behavior and smoking did not appeal to the citizens



A married couple from Albania, 1875

*who could not accept the idea that a woman could afford to talk to men-teachers who were not her relatives. They imposed strict control on her, that made her immediately leave the city after the end of the school year. "*

Hristo Shaldev, "History of Prilep", 1916.

**Source 2.** "In Plovdiv, one of the biggest Bulgarian cities, prominent women and even those of middle rank were forbidden to go out of their houses alone. And if there was no relative to accompany them when they were going to pay a social visit, for example, a servant was following them.... For a woman, it was impossible whatsoever to attend men's meetings. This was even more impossible for a woman-teacher on whom all parents' looks were fixed. I often wanted to go to some of the meetings held in the library to attend public readings of famous stories and other literary works, but I never dared to do such a thing."

Rada Kirkovich, memoirs, 1927.



- What did these two women refuse to do (or wanted to)?
- What did they finally do?

As we can guess it was not easy for a woman to neglect the social rules and restrictions. In order to control the *body* behavior of the individual public places were also divided into feminine and masculine ones:

- There were separate schools for boys and girls,
- Pubs and cafés were meant for men only,
- There were public talking and working-places only for men,
- There was a horo (folk dance) for men and a horo for women,
- The tickets for the theater in some Bulgarian cities were issued according to masculine and feminine seats: *“The entrance tickets were simple pieces of paper...and had the letter M (for men) and W (for women)”*.

N. Nachev, “Kalofer in the Past”, 1927.

- What, do you think, was the aim of this strict borderline dividing the space where men and women could be expected to interact with each other?
- What did people fear of if a woman and a man were in a close contact – especially when they could sit next to each other?
  - physical contact?
  - they would speak with each other?
  - emotional contact?
  - they would speak about family secrets?

This “harmonious” order rested predominantly upon the girl’s and boy’s obedience to their parents’ will and to the family interest which limited the choice of a partner and, secondly, upon the woman’s obedience to the role assigned to her by society, namely a wife and a mother. This obedience was achieved by ‘wrapping’ her body by prohibitions that regulated

her everyday attitudes: including the shame and fear of her own body: This is why according to the norms of the patriarchal culture, the body should be covered by cloths, which had to make invisible its erotic desires; the body movements should be restricted in such a way to avoid any emotional contacts: touch with eyes, giving a hand and touching the knees were prohibited. These norms made feelings and the sexual desires in something shameful, the prohibitions for getting in contact between genders created fear of one’s body. Through the shame and the fear the relationships between men and women were regulated in patriarchal society.

*“Fear of a man, fear of strangers, fear of her own self, fear of everything. Was this a life? Just like animals: be born, give birth, die”*, said the heroine in a famous play performed many times every theatrical season to a large audience in Sofia at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

This is a text from Ivan Hadzhijski, a Bulgarian historian and sociologist of the patriarchal and modern society, which describes the influence of the Turkish mentality on everyday life of the Bulgarians.

**Source 3.** *“Because of the influence of Turkish sexual conception over the craftsmen towns some restrictions for women existed which did not aim at their personal humiliation: the Turks, one of the most interesting people because of their views, guarded sexual chastity using all possible means.*

*First: beginning with the idea that the appetite from watching is the preparation for eating, did not allow either another man to see the woman or the woman to see another man. There was no more fruitful means to achieve this than high fences and latticed harems.*

*Second: when a woman was to go out she wrapped her body in no less than 20 meters of fabrics and she put a veil on her face.*

*Third: if by accident a man made a mis-*





*Capajevo-Sarajevo. Marktscene.*

Market place, Sarajevo, 1920s

*take with his first wife, or if she did not meet the expectation of feminine chastity and moral values, he had the right to have a second, third, fourth etc. wife in order to correct the mistake and thus to compensate for the missing values of his previous wives. Thus the Turkish men can find everything within the family... and feel no need of adultery."*

I. Hadzhijski, *Way of life and Spirit of Bulgarian People*, Sofia, 1995.

- What was allowed and what was forbidden for women to do in everyday life?

- What did the author mean by "*the Turks, one of the most interesting people because of their views*"? How did he value their attitudes to women?

- Do you agree with him that "these restrictions did not aim at their (women's) personal humiliation"?

- What could you say about his own values and his attitude towards women?

The division of the space in the patriarchal world into male and female provided women with the opportunity to communicate between themselves. Things that were not connected with the family were discussed. These were the things that challenged the female imagination and dreams, provoked by the narratives of their husbands returning from distant places. Usually, this happened at weekends or on holidays when women used to go to church and had free time to be together and to speak to each other after the sermon.

Here is what the Bulgarian politician and diplomat, M. Madjarov, wrote about such a day in mid 19<sup>th</sup> century, describing his home town:

**Source 4.** "*It seems to me that the women in Koprivshitz gain their public knowledge and development in the churches, but not from the church readings that are hardly listened to, but from the talks. Due to the regular go-*



ing to church every woman in Koprivshitz meets at least ten other women and talks with them about many different issues. Everything that the men have brought back home and have experienced while being abroad is repeated there. They know lots of things about Alexandria, Anadola etc. The towns Tzarigrad, Smirna, Aidun (the biggest towns in Ottoman Empire) etc. are known not only by name, but also by their climate, folklore clothes and customs. A woman is speaking about a town and another five women are listening. Then another starts her story and this is how they are exchanging information. The islands in the Mediterranean and the Aegean sea are much more familiar to the women than the towns in North Bulgaria. Tzarigrad, Alexandria, Smirna are nearer than Pleven, Elena, Razgrad (Bulgarian towns)".

(M. Madjarov, Memoirs, 1942)

Let's remember that the division of public space into male and female was one of the ways through which the bodily behavior and the relations between men and women were controlled in the patriarchal world.

- Why did the women have the need to communicate with one another in such a society?
- What were women interested in?
- What did men's narratives about foreign countries, stocks and gifts evoke in women?
- Do you think that female curiosity about the outside world, about distant places with exotic customs and fashion would influence their attitudes to their own world: the house and family?
- Did they try to change their clothes and the interior of their houses?

Men preferred women to be only housewives and to do the work considered by them as female.

**Source 5.** *"If the machines enter Turkey,*

*Sliven will suffer most. A machine for 10 groshes will weave as much as 150 women weavers per day. Then woman will be released from her work and will be free to take care of her housework which she is meant for by God, i.e.: to cook, wash her husband's shirts, make bread and look after her children and home. In Kalofer women are skillful weavers of wool and fabrics known all around Turkey... Here women are devoted only to weaving and cannot cook, prepare bread, wash shirts..."*

I. Bogorov (Bulgarian intellectual); Some Days in Walks around the Bulgarian Places...

- What female skills were valued by men during that epoch?
- Why were not female's craftsman skills appreciated?

Of course, it would be also interesting to know what men did in their free time. Here are two sources revealing their everyday life in typically male places:

**Source 6.** *"Men in Veliko Turnovo (the former Bulgarian capital) crowd in the cafes during the winter, where they spend their time playing games. In some cafes there are no newspapers or other readings. On holidays during the summer they go to the vineyards, or visit the near city, or walk along the river on weekdays. Youngsters drink during these walks which is not good."*

P. R. Slaveikov (Bulgarian writer), 1885.

1. How did the male everyday life in a craftsman town look like according to these extracts? Try to imagine some of the family narratives told by these people and their attitude towards their wives.
2. Did they, in your opinion, have a hard life?
3. Try to imagine what men used to talk about during their walks.





Students of Female school "Carmen Silva", 1936, Romania

### Boys and Girls: Getting in Contact

As we know, the restrictions in every day life of the 19<sup>th</sup> century did not create spaces for social communication between the genders before marriage, thus depriving them from the opportunity to get acquainted with each other. One of the results was the shame and fear of the emotional and sexual desires of one's own body, which was common behavior of women and men from that time.

These feelings of shame were, for example, expressed in the songs about the shepherd who did not dare to face and touch the maid chosen to be his wife by his mother during the first marriage night. In the semi-craftsmen and semi-farming village the engagement was conducted when the boy-shepherd was absent and he had not even seen the girl.

**Source 7.** *"Very often in the wealthy shepherd families the engagements are negotiated when the children are infants and the weddings when they grow up... the boy sees the chosen girl when he comes back for the wedding".*

H. Dimitrov, The history of a village near Kotel

- Could you even think of such a marriage today? How would you feel in this situation?
- Do you know other examples of marriage contracts (e.g. from other social classes)?

**Source 8.** *"The girls in Sliven (Bulgarian town) are of medium height, have round faces, black eyes, but they run like goats from men and hide from them. They can be seen only from a distance and on holidays at the gates of the houses. But if you approach to them, they run and hide. Very often they slam the door if they notice that somebody is looking at them with curiosity..."*

I. Bogorov, Some Days...

- What do you think, why did these girls behave in this way?

The shame and fear, which determined the emotional and sexual attitude were a result of all the limitations which hinder women and men from getting in touch before marriage and from





Students, Bosnia

expressing openly their feelings. Even at places, where girls and boys were supposed to get acquainted with each other, such as weddings, drinking fountains in the villages, family visits, walks to the bakery and to the shops in the cities, the exchange of glances and words was only possible under the rigid supervising look of the mother, a married relative or the old matchmaker. This supervision controlled their bodies, guaranteeing that they would be within the restrictions of patriarchal morality, i.e. the girls and boys would not touch their hands, would not look each other in the eye, would not talk about their intimate feelings.

The deviation from these norms was punished in the toughest manner, through public reprimand. Ivan Hadzhiiski noticed: *“The disgrace, the collective denunciation of somebody is a ‘citizen’s death’, it is the worst punishment, which often provokes shame in the guilty person ending up with madness or suicide”*.

- What did “a citizen’s death” mean? How did other people (“the society”) react?
- Do you know similar examples from modern times?
- What is socially “forbidden” today in your society?

The following story was recorded in the memoir book of an Bulgarian artisan from the middle of the century:

**Source 9.** *“The son of the most famous chorbadzija (a wealthy man) in the town was a schoolboy and he wrote some words addressed to a schoolgirl... It was, of course, a childish deed in which there was nothing obscene. The father found all about it, got furious and beat his son in front of all the teachers and students. The boy could not bear the shame, got sick and died. The father was sorry for his action but it was too late”*.





A girl masked in ball suit, Timishoara, 1920s

- Why did the father react in this way?
- Can you understand his reaction – from his point of view, at his time, in his world?

Ivan Hadgiiski gave an example of public ostracism of a girl when she refused to follow the restrictions and norms of the community where she lives:

**Source 10.** “ Here is the short story of the first Troyan (Bulgarian town) ‘prostitute’. It is about Pena from the upper side of the town who agreed at the price of a sleeveless

jacket to go with the boy who gave it to her to the village center, dressed in the same sleeveless jacket. Nothing else. Pena “put this shame on herself” and took this sleeveless jacket but died unmarried stigmatized as a “djadiya” (prostitute). And really she did something which was not allowed even to fiancées.”

Imagine how the girl lived, what this social punishment meant for her everyday life, e.g. when she went shopping or when she wanted to go to church or to speak to other people.

Ask your parents and grandparents if they know similar examples from their youth.

What about unmarried mothers, illegitimate children and unmarried couples today? Are there any differences today between the city and the country?

The social values of this time demanded women and men, girls and boys not to express their wishes, dreams and feelings and especially to hide everything concerning their bodily wishes, desires and problems.

For example, the prominent Bulgarian poet Kiril Hristov, author of the first erotic verses in Bulgarian, wrote in 1940 about his meetings in the end of the 19 century: “*Our meetings were very short and not in private... There were exceptions only in moon nights when the blind street became deserted and asleep. We were walking side by side, not daring to hold hand in hand, talking about the least important things, only not about how much we love each other.*”

Do you know other examples (e.g. films, novels) which describe a similar situation?

With the following text we can get insight of the male fear of the “threat of outside entertainment”:

**Source 11.** *“The woman from Gabrovo is still a housewife and caring mother. Her pleasures are in the frames of these things. She does not know the humiliating pleasures of the outside world that has been ruling the women from Turnovo and ruining the families there. Devoted to her work in the house, the woman in Gabrovo teaches her children order and assiduousness. While the women from Turnovo, devoted to outside entertainment, lead their children in the same way and teach them to seek pleasures with all means”.*

T. Ikonov, Impressions from Traveling, 1871.

1. Did he exaggerate the threat of “outside” entertainment as walks, visits, gatherings for talking and gossiping, participating in female organizations...?

2. What kind of influence over the female behavior did the author have fear of?

3. Try to define the conservative values defended by the author.

But there were also a few situations where these strict rules were “abandoned”, for example at holidays and weddings, even in the patriarchal world:

**Source 12.** *“There is a gathering of men and women servants at Easter. At holidays all the women and men from Veliko Turnovo go for a walk to the vineyards. Everything is lightened by fires at vintage: the women, mainly maids from the mountain villages, gather grape during the day and at night play horo. It is a merry view - fires, bagpipes, and the happy voices “iihuu”.*

Petko R. Slaveikov, Bulgarian writer, 1885.

*“The weddings are the top of all the entertainment. The women and men play together*



New married, Bosnia, 1920s

*a horo and so on. At other time such “strong” emotions are forbidden, impossible because of the rules ... The horo is ours, folklore. We all know it, and there we are free and equal. All the clusters from the people gather together with small or no differences in the clothes”.*

“Balls and horo”, Newspaper “Patriot”, 1898.

- What kind of emotions were allowed to men and women at the time of holidays that were not allowed in the everyday life?

- How did the celebration affect the relations between men and women?

- Compare this entertainment with the one from the 1930s.

- What has changed in the relations between boys and girls? What were the restrictions that are gone?

- What new culture did the new dances create and how did they change the attitude of girls and boys towards their bodies?



And here is an example of how young people started changing the traditional ideas about the girl's outlook and behavior in public:

**Source 13.** *"I got attached to Lucy..., a tall, thin brunette with sensitive lips and lively devilish eyes. She was an emancipated woman, who smoked, drank at bars and exchanged dirty jokes with her friends.... She was a generous creature, wonderfully free, ready to help her friends... She loved Sava truly. Her manner of living, lack of self-restrictions, her language were completely different from ours, but that made her more interesting to us the 'bourgeois' boys... She reacted with a mix of humor and curiosity to our mentality, may be sometimes wanting to be like us... When the rumor reached my mother, she was horrified... 'I did not sleep all the night', she warned me of the threat that such 'affairs' pose to the honorable youngsters like me and Sava"*

St. Gruev, Memoirs; "Letopissi", 1996/7/8

- What was the author's attitude to Lucy's behavior?
- Was this attitude a threat to the conservative values? How? Why?
- Confront these 'liberal' perceptions of the 1930s of the 20<sup>th</sup> century with the 'conservative' ones?

But even in the big cities where the strict patriarchal norms became more relaxed after the First World, boys and girls still felt uneasy to express their personal feelings. That's why they sought additional means to convey their desires and moods of their bodies: poetry, love depiction on greeting cards, phrases from love



Hiking in Vitosha Mountain, 1930s, Bulgaria

novels and from the newly appeared sound films. More frequently they turned to the guitar and the mandolin.

After the First World War the number of women, going to libraries, was almost the same as that of men according to the statistics of Bulgaria and Slovenia. In addition their interest was redirected from novels and poetry, which were still the favorite female readings, to philosophy, history, psychology, sociology, and medical magazines. Along with the traditional female magazines about housewives, education and fashion, which supported the traditional female role, the girls' interest moved towards knowledge, revealing the secrets of the genders and the wishes of the body.



- How is this today? Are there still differences in the reading and leisure interests of girls and boys?
- Which kind of youth journals did you read when you were younger? Which kind of readings are you interested in today? Are there any differences between girls and boys? And if yes, why do you think there are differences?

Let's see how strong shame and fear of one's own body were experienced according to the personal memories of girls and boys from this time. Here is the story of a 15 year old boy left in "Once upon a time in Sofia. The 1930s and 1940s in the view of a man from Sofia". This boy was Bozhidar Mihajlov, a famous Bulgarian cinema critic.

**Source 14.** *"The orator explained to us the secrets, connected with the reproduction. He used analogous examples from the life of hens, doves, and horses... No, we the children, were not the fruit of the God blessing, but of*

*the most banal, animalistic and rude contacts! I was shocked, ashamed, offended, angry at my parents. I went home and threw myself on the bed, shaken by cries and tears. ... I do not know how further we have gone in respect to the sexual education of our children and grand children. But I know that in some countries the unavoidable discoveries, linked to the gender are made very painlessly and naturally for the parents and the children. Books are published that gradually introduce the children to this new world. They help them to penetrate without any stress or traumas for their childish psyche into the intriguing secrets of the being. But then, in the 1930s, the sex was a taboo, which nobody dared to interfere with. The fear and inexperience of the parents, the hypocrisy and indifference of the society were allies in the name of silence, total silence. The whole care was passed to Her Majesty the Street - the street with its extraordinary breath, with the known and unknown*





in it, the evil and good that is hidden in it, with all its secrets and seduction. But I want to admit that my brother turned to be a rare, happy and unexpected exception in this pedagogical desert. I was in the 7th or 8<sup>th</sup> grade when one day (I still believe that he did it by his initiative) Mitko left a big volume on the table, near the textbooks.

- It is high time for you to read this book and learn some things - he pronounced these words airily and left my room in the attic.

I looked at the book and read "Dr. August Forel, The Sexual Question". I was surprised and impressed. This event did a real revolution, which comprehended not only mine, but also the neighboring streets. The sexual education in the quarter was on a scientific base from this moment on. My lectures in front of the illegal auditorium were conspiracies -

hidden in the nook of some yard. I made the corresponding images with a nail on the sand and after that I erased them very carefully".

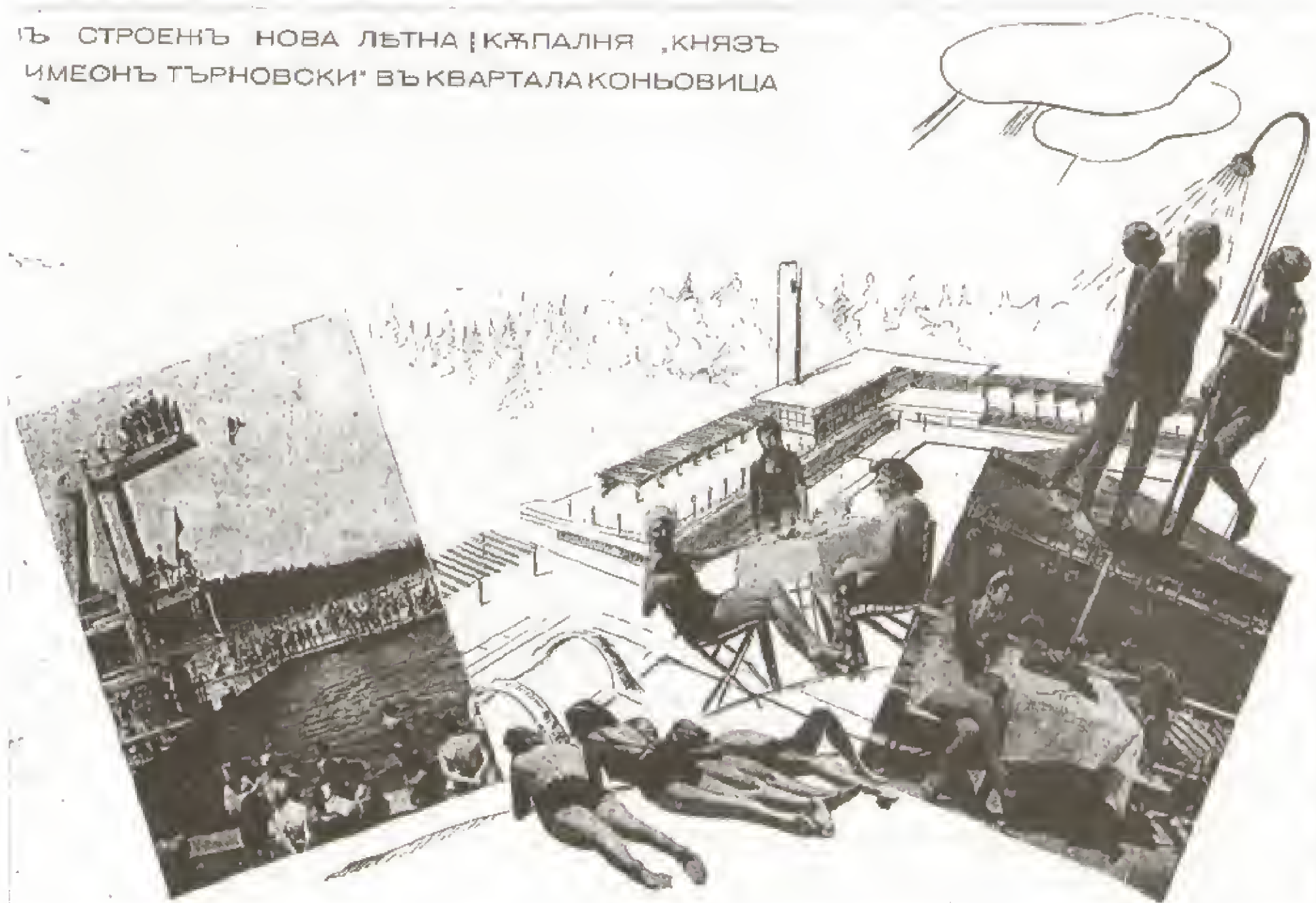
Why was the boy so shocked? What could he have preferred?

And how is it today? When did you learn about "reproduction" and how? Could you speak about these topics at school?

What roles do television and movies play in the field of sexual education today?

Public prohibitions limited the sexual desires and love feelings of women and men in family. Generally the family was the only legitimate place of sexuality and intimate experience of men and women till the First World War. Love before marriage was not tolerated by the public opinion and was often defined as

ВЪ СТРОЕНЪ НОВА ЛЪТНА КЪПАЛНЯ „КНЯЗЪ  
ИМЕОНЪ ТЪРНОВОКИ“ ВЪ КВАРТАЛА КОНЬОВИЦА



Advertisement of the new summer bath, Sofia, 1920s



sinful by the traditions of the patriarchal society and of the Orthodox, Catholic or Islamic religious norms.

But, at the same time a new phenomena encouraged overcoming the old public norms legitimizing the new attitude to one's body. This was the cinema. Its influence over the imagination became more strong and effective than the power of the novel literature image. In the memoirs of boys and girls from that period films were outlined as an important factor for *"disappearing of the obsolete shame of the youngsters to express their feelings"*.

**Source 15.** *"The rebellion against shame from the physical essence of the body and the inherited norms for behaving happened very cautiously as late as after the First World War. The example, given by some bald and proud girls from Sofia who bathed in the sea with tight bathing suits, was accepted with reproaches and resentment by everybody. The joy that the released from the clothes body felt under the caress of the sun rays and sea waves, was named shameful, nasty, depraving pleasure. The mixed sunbathing was proclaimed cynical lewdness. This prejudice was not gone even 16 years later.*

*In a summer day in 1921, when I was going to the only beach at the old monastery 'St. Constantine', I met the Minister of Justice... When he spread out his hand to greet me, he angrily said:*

*- K., what is this scandalous, shameless and outrageous attitude and how does the authority stand it?*

*- What do you mean?*

*- Don't you see that down there men and women are bathing?*

*- So what if this is a pleasure?*

*- A pleasure! This is not a pleasure, but debauchery!*

*The other day, at the regular time, I started for the beach...A harsh voice surprised me*

*some meters from the stairs: 'Stop!' There was an armed guard.*

*- Forbidden for men! ... Only women can bathe here.*

*... The rebellion of the minister sounded to me like a dead frippery.*

D. Kazasov, p. 309-310.

1. What was the attitude of the author towards the patriarchal norms?

2. Who were the rebels against these norms?

3. Which were the new places where the body was released from the traditional norms of behavior?

### Final Questions:

1. Let's remember how the boys and girls communicated in the patriarchal society. Were there places where they could contact and get acquainted with each other?

2. Compare the ways and places for communication today with those from the past. What is the biggest change in the attitude to the body for the last 200 years?

3. What are the means and ways through which the young people start to overcome the norms of the patriarchal culture?

4. How do they start to get along with their bodies, understand their desires and then express them freely?



# Education

Throughout the historical development of education a clear difference in the treatment of each of the sexes can be seen. This is the case with the structure of educational institutions – schools, courses and universities, as well as with the regulation of the access of children and young people to these institutions, the syllabus design of school subjects and the

design of teaching materials.

Apart from the analysis of racial, class, national and other constraints the history of education may also involve a gender analysis. What is more, the school itself (even the kindergarten) is an important step on the way of the preparation of young people for their future roles of men and women. In the educational institutions young boys and girls were very often encouraged to play certain types of games or discouraged to play others practicing the roles that would confirm their future identification as men or women.

When the institutions of mass education in the bourgeois society were established, the access to these institutions was regulated and the results achieved by the students were considered as an important precondition for achieving social progress in adulthood. The supporters of the so called *educational idealism* in the 19<sup>th</sup> century held that the primary so-

cial equality was the equality in the opportunities for education while the rest of the social equalities were secondary in character. Whether educational institutions imposed a differentiation of the sexes or they insured equal treatment of them was of vital importance for the developmental opportunities of the individual.





Girls and boys used to play in separate groups in the kindergarten, Nord Bulgaria, 1940

*"I won't allow you to become a nun. You'll be a lay person. No girl knows how to read."*

### Education and Gender Relations in Traditional Societies

Educational institutions for women in Europe were established under the influence of the ideas of the Enlightenment. Of great importance was the idea of the Swiss educationist Pestalozzi who analyzed the connection between the family and social life stressing the role of the mother as an educator. These views outlined the scope of the education for women placing it, however, in a certain social context, defined by focusing on the family function of women.

Education in South-East Europe followed the specific characteristics of the different parts of the region. Because of the specific conditions in which Christian population lived in the Ottoman Empire, the education for women started first in the convents where girls were

given some literacy training. The convents were the places where most of the first generations of women teachers were trained. In the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century they laid the foundations of secular education for women and established the first women's schools. At the beginning many families were reluctant to the idea of education for women. The general opinion was that the girl should receive training mainly in skills needed for housekeeping or family farming and literacy was needed only if she was being prepared to become a nun. Many families were sceptical even as far as boys' education was concerned, but more and more vocational opportunities, requiring literacy appeared. For example they could become priests or merchants. The change of attitudes towards girls' education was due mainly to the ideas of the enlightenment and the understanding that society needs educated mothers. These were the arguments of the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century women's societies to start the education of young women and to sup-





The First Graduates of the Girls' College, 1913 (From Zehra Toska's personal archives)

port the girls who wanted to continue their studies:

*"The ignorant person is an untrimmed tree. Education is a fortune which can neither be damaged by moths nor can it be stolen by thieves".* Wrote one of the founder members of women's societies in Bulgaria.

However in some regions of South-East Europe it was as early as the 19<sup>th</sup> century when literacy was acquired by much greater sections of the population including women. Such regions were mainly parts of Austria-Hungary where education became compulsory for both sexes as early as the 18<sup>th</sup> century. In the rest of

South-East Europe the percentage of literate people increased in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The growing literacy rate for women can be illustrated by the example of Turkey where the share of literate women rose from less than 10% to over 70% in less than two generations.

#### Ratio of literate population by census year and sex

Census year	Female %	Male %
1935	9,81	29,35
1955	25,61	55,94
1990	71,98	88,81



### Ratio of female population in literate population

Census year	Ratio of female pop. in literate pop. %
1935	26,35
1955	30,78
1990	44,21

Woman in Statistics 1927-1992, State Institute of  
Statistics Prime Ministry Republic of Turkey, 1995

*“Every year I cried and begged them to let  
me attend high school...”*

### Modern Society: Education and Life Plans

At the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> and the beginning of  
the 20<sup>th</sup> century truancy was a frequent phe-  
nomenon especially in the countryside. The  
situation was especially difficult in mountain-  
ous regions where boys and girls had to walk

for miles to go to school. Because of reasons  
like illness, work etc. peasant children were very  
often forced to stop going to school. This held  
true especially for girls. Very often girls had to  
substitute for the mother and help her look af-  
ter younger children. The change of the atti-  
tudes towards school and education in general  
for girls presented an important change in the  
way of thinking which was very often associ-  
ated to a personal drama experienced by many  
people. With the expansion of women educa-  
tion to higher levels the high schools for many  
girls turned into places where they discussed  
their future plans and let their imagination soar  
beyond any limits. For many young women edu-  
cation and vocational training was the only way  
to achieve independence and find the opportu-  
nity to help their families. Many girls aspired  
to job positions to serve society and to a pro-  
fessional career: as teachers, doctors or nurses;  
later on as pharmacists, lawyers, architects and  
engineers. Having been educated women for



Exam time at Belgrade University, 1990s (*Transitions*, 1998)



many of them meant that their moral duty was to help others, that was why many of them got interested in social services. The increase of the variety of social services positions at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century enabled women having proper education to start careers as clerks and officers in the social services. Further education became a real necessity and the question for university education for women was raised. Women's access to higher education was widely discussed. Some of its opponents argued that women were incapable of deep thought and had no scholastic aptitude. Others supported the extremist idea that higher education and the stresses of university studies could prove fatal for the 'weak' female organism. Other moral considerations existed as well. It was claimed that high education for women would destroy the family. Family life might be endangered by women's involvement in social struggles and this, in turn, would ruin the values of motherhood. Therefore a great part of the discussion on gender equality was focused on the struggle for the right of higher education.

There was no country in the region in which women's access to higher education was given without furious social arguments and this was to underline how fundamental for society this problem was. For example in Ljubljana University in 1919 women students comprised only 3% of the total number of students while 20 years later, in 1939 they were almost 20% and today they are 59%. In Hungary the struggle for higher education for women started as early as the 1870s. The first Hungarian women to become university graduates finished their education abroad: this was the case with the first Hungarian lady doctor Vilma Hugonnai. Almost at the same time in Switzerland the first Bulgarian, Dr. Anastasia Golovina, acquired a degree in medicine. In Turkey it was in 1914 when the first women were allowed to attend university. In Bulgaria this happened as early as 1901. As we can see



Albania, 1970s

even before the First World War women managed to assert their presence in the universities all through South East Europe. Even with the first generations of university students, there were considerable differences between the genders regarding the changes brought into the students' lives by their university studies. For example in the mid-1920s a Sofia University students' survey showed that out of 2601 male students 245 were married while out of 1004 female students only 32 were family women. Obviously taking care of the family affected the academic work of men and women in a different way. This reiterated the need for special amenities for student mothers. Another disproportion which had survived for a long time at university education was the ratio of men/women from the countryside. The same survey established that 518 men came from the country while the number of women was only 28. On the other hand though, in spite of



## Sources

*It was not common for girls in the 19<sup>th</sup> century to get a higher education*

### 1. The memoirs of Saba Vazova (1832-1912)

[...] In 1847 they got me engaged and then my brother Gueorgui, who had graduated Greek and French in Plovdiv, found out that I want to learn how to read and write... I was 14 then. I couldn't get enough reading. If I was knitting a sock – the book was with me; if I was doing the housework or helping my mother with the baby – the book was in one of my hands all the time. My mother often scolded me that I was not careful with my work and I was wasting my time reading. She used to say: *'I won't allow you to become a nun. You'll be a lay person. No girl knows how to read. It's only Nedelya Gulyuva who does. Do you want to be like her? Is that why you won't let that book go? Take the sock right away.'*

When it was a holiday I usually took care the rooms to get tidy then I got dressed and after that I used to sit down with a book in a quite room. I kept on reading all day long. I read through Plutarch, Telemach, Robinson (Robinson came in the inner pages of a paper), I devoured song books and many others... After that, when I read through the papers that were received by my elder brother, I learned the news and often on holidays our relatives came in the afternoons so that I could read to them or tell them the news.

#### Answer the questions:

1. Where did young S. Vazova learn how to read and write?
2. What was the difference between the education of the girls and the boys in the family from the 1850s?



First book, 1915

such disproportions universities turned into places where both sexes could communicate on equal terms and where new forms of social life and new youth culture emerged.

Although after World War II the countries in South-East Europe shared the general tendencies towards egalitarian education for both sexes, it should be bore in mind that many of the regional and social differences in the educational opportunities were preserved to the present and were even widened. This particularly refers to the regions which are involved in military conflicts as well as great social problems like unemployment and high rate of emigration. These differences refer to the access to education in the areas of the foreign languages, computer literacy, or modern vocational education.



3. Why did S. Vazova become literate at the age of 14?

- Because she did not want to learn;
- Because she was poor;
- Because it was generally considered that literacy was necessary only for those girls who would become nuns;
- Because her parents did not think their children needed to learn;
- Because it was only then when her brother set to improve her education;

4. What is the difference between the life of the girl in the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century and the life of the girl in modern times?

5. What skills were valued by the girl's family?

- To be able to keep the house tidy;
- To be able to cook;
- To be able to knit;
- To be a good student;
- To help her mother;
- To entertain guests;

6. Can girls today knit socks? Is this skill necessary nowadays? Can you knit?

7. What kind of books did S. Vazova read? Are these books interesting to young people of today?

## 2. Memoirs of Efrossinia Nikolova, born 1885

From *"I am a double mother: Grandma Frosca tells stories"*.

A whole week passed. I am not allowed to go to school. I keep on crying and begging mother to let me continue going to school. I promise I'll help her, I'll do whatever she asks me to do.

Mother only says: 'Don't cry. You've had enough education. You see, you know how to write letters to your father. I'm illiterate. So what? I'm still alive! I need you to help me look



Group of village girls at practical school, Bulgaria, 1930s

after the baby. Your grandma lives too far away. Winter's coming...

I can't stop crying, keep on reading my lessons, my friends from school came and asked me what the matter was. They told me that the teachers asked them why Frosca was playing truant.

I kept my school bag like something sacred. I often read my textbooks. My younger brother Miho used the same school bag to go school, but he wasn't eager to learn, he wasn't as good as I was.

### Questions:

1. What were the reasons for the girl to be stopped from going to school?
2. Point out those parts of the text which show that the girl was really willing to go to school.



### 3. Biography of Vilma Hugonnai (Hungary)

Vilma Hugonnai Gyorgyne Szillassy read an article in the journal "Hon" edited by Mor Jokai on Switzerland where women were allowed to study. She was reading and educating herself but her only son became 6 years old and her mother in law took over the education. Her husband did not understand why his wife was not satisfied with the traditional way of living as a noble woman. She was allowed to go to study by the family council consisting of only male members but without financial support. She used her family jewelry to cover the costs of her 6 years of study; she became a vegetarian because of financial reasons. She graduated in 1879 and returned home. In Hungary she made attempts to notify her diploma, the committee accepted her application for a Mature, but did not notify her diploma, because women were not allowed to work as doctors. She was advised to study midwifery in a course that she did with great dignity after she had already graduated as a doctor and started to practice as a midwife. In 1884 she divorced and spent all her life for health. The decree on opening the Faculty of Arts and Medicine had a point on notification of Diploma and her degree was also notified but she had to pass three exams at the age of 50, and she was given the degree on 16 May 1897. She died in 1922.

#### Answer the questions:

1. What circles of Hungarian society did she come from?
  - Did she stick to the traditional life path of women? To what extend?
  - Was her husband able to understand her aspirations?
2. How did she solve the problem of lacking any financial support for her study at University?
  - Where did she decide to go after graduation? Why?

3. What did she practice? Was her diploma recognized? How old was she when she was finally recognized as a physician?

4. How did her family react?

5. Was she correct to her family when she left them for several years?

- Was her family correct to her when they left her without any financial support?

- What are you ready to offer as a sacrifice to realize your dreams to study?

6. How should someone act if his/her family does not support his/her personal endeavors?

#### Mark the right statements:

During the 19<sup>th</sup> century:

- a. Women were not allowed to study university anywhere around Europe
- b. Women could not dispose of their own property
- c. Divorce was not permitted
- d. Husbands opposed to the university degrees of their wives

*The idea that woman are not able to get a public work or scientific career was also spread by some teachers in the school. The famous Yugoslavian writer Branislav Nušić, gets us back in the time of the 1870s with his remarkable sense of humor.*

### 4. The autobiography of Serbian and Yugoslavian writer Branislav Nušić (1864)

[...] But when the teacher (of Mathematics) had to explain us the meaning of zero, we were really confused, the teacher was set in a difficult situation too. He tried various ways, but either he couldn't manage to explain it to us or we couldn't understand him.





Courses in culinary art, Girl's School for practical agriculture, Bulgaria, 1938

“Zero, children, is nothing, but still it can be something. When it’s single, it’s nothing, it’s not worth a bean, but if you put it next to number one, it becomes ten, and if you put it next to two, it becomes twenty. God knows why but it’s like that. It can’t be explained easily. But now – for example my wife... Before she’s married me, let us say, my wife was nil, but now with me, now she is the wife of the master. Is that right?”

“That’s right!” replied the whole class.

After that explanation, of course, all of us started to think his wife as a zero, and every number ten seemed to us as a married couple. In our children’s fantasy the married women from our town appeared to us as zeros, and the digits next to them were their husbands. Even certain people seemed to us as certain digits. For example, the county governor and his wife looked like number 90 to us.

### Answer the questions:

1. In what historical time did the story happen?
2. How did the teacher describe the zero? Do you think this is the best explanation of the meaning of zero?
3. What lesson were children taught? Was it only about Mathematics?
4. What do you think about the teacher’s attitude towards women?
5. How did the author feel about this lesson. Was his attitude reflected in the text?
6. What do you think about the statement, that woman without husband is zero, nothing?

### Mark the right answers:

Why did such a parallel occur to the teacher of Mathematics?

- Because his wife was not highly educated;
- Because his wife was economically dependant;

- Because his wife' social position was determined by his own one;
- Because he had an occupation, and his wife did not have any
- Because in his circle there were no women, having high social status.
- Because the children would understand such an explanation.

*Some girls had the chance to go to school and also to participate in study trips.*

*The following paragraph is from an essay titled "En route to the Eternal City" by Zacharina Nicheva, a student in the 8<sup>th</sup> class.*

### **5. Students from the First Sofia High School for Girls shared their experiences during their trip to Italy in 1929.**

To see Italy for real was for me something that I could not even imagine; in my earliest dreams this country was one of the most beau-

tiful visions, for her I had created a whole new world, she lived in my soul and developed there. And now, I am going to this country from which Goethe departed with great sorrow and loved more than his own cold land. Where Shelly was laid to rest in peace, where Pencho Slaveykov left this world, he, who was the philosopher of our poetry, the greatest idealist in life.

[...] We are walking along the straight well paved and broad street and the ruins rise at our sides. [...] I close my eyes: the street – broad and clean... A motley crowd of aristocrats, salesmen and slaves... The proud figure of the tribune evokes whispers and greetings... Heavy iron door is slammed and the young proud patrician is hidden behind it.

We are leaving Ostia antica, throwing final glance of farewell at the old Regina and hiding to the port itself.

[...] The wind is playing with the green leaves of the palms, olive trees and Italian pines. Their sad whispering accompanied by the ringing murmur of the sea waves rises up above



Physics Students in Vitosha mountain, 1930s





Students, Bosnia, 1930s

us to merge with the noisy joyful laughter of young Bulgarian ladies getting ready for a snapshot. We are leaving Ostia, then Rome too... I threw ten cents in 'Di Trevi' fountain saying 'Good-bye'!

### Questions:

1. What emotions were expressed by the school girls before their departure to Italy?

2. How would you comment Zacharina Nicheva's education?

- In what way did the girls' education affect their perceptions in the foreign country?

- What impressed them in Rome?

3. What couldn't they notice in Rome? Recall who ruled Italy at the time. How can you explain the fact that the political and social problems of the time were not mentioned?

- She was not aware of them because they were

not discussed in her family;

- Her teachers did not expect her to discuss political and social issues;

- She wanted to impress her literature teacher and to prove that she was an excellent student.

4. What would attract your attention in a foreign country?

- The life of young people ;

- Social issues;

- Tourist sites;

- Clubs and public entertainment;

- Fashion;

5. In what way can education influence the schoolgirls' imagination?

6. Describe a city in a foreign country and try to find out what influences your perceptions.

7. What has changed in the opportunities for communication between young people in Europe since the time when the essay was written?



School's excursion to Black sea coast, 1926

*Here you will find another example for a girl who had a high education and started a career as musician*

## 6. Biography of Suna Kan, Turkey

Suna Kan was born in Adana, Turkey. She started playing the violin at the age of five and gave her first public concerts when she was nine years old, performing Mozart's A major and Viotti's A minor violin concertos. She continued her studies in Ankara under Izzet Albayrak and Lico Amar. In 1949 she was sent to France on a scholarship, under a special law passed by the Turkish Grand National Assembly. She studied with Gabriel Bouillon at the Paris Conservatoire and graduated in 1952, winning the First Prize. Later on, she received the title "State Artist" from the Turkish government. She was also awarded "Chevalier dans l'ordre National du Merite" from the Government of France.

Suna Kan's extensive concert tours have so far covered most parts of the world, including England, France, Germany, Italy, Switzerland, Belgium, Holland, Sweden, Norway, Russian, China, Japan, South American countries, Canada and the United States. She has performed with many international orchestras such as the London Symphony, the Los Angeles Philharmonic, Bamberg Symphony, Residentie Orchestra (Holland), Moscow Symphony, French National Radio Symphony (ORTF) under great conductors like Istvan Kertesz, Arthur Fiedler, Walter Susskind, Hans Rosbaud, Gotthold Lessing, Louis Fremaux, Michel Plasson. She also collaborated with celebrated artists like Yehudi Menuhin, Igor Bezrodny, Pierre Fournier, Andre Navarra, and Frederick Riddle in performing double concertos.

At present, in addition to her concerts, broadcasts and recording activities, she is a professor of violin at the Bilkent University Faculty of Music, in Ankara.

### Questions:

1. How old was Suna Kan as she started to play violin? How old was she when she gave her first public concert?
2. What did Suna Kan achieve and how do you estimate these achievements?
  - In what sphere of the musical art did Suna Kan show?
  - Why did she have to start to playing that early?
3. How does the state support the talented boys and girls?
4. What kind of the public recognition did Suna Kan get in Turkey?
5. What other Balkan female musicians do you know?
6. In what type of musical genres are the Balkan musicians most famous?
7. Do you have a favorite performer or a band in South East Europe?



## Ideal Woman?

After 1850s when still traditional values were taught to girls, there was also, step by step, a change of the female image. Men journalists explained the crisis in marriage and the newly appeared tendencies of negative attitude towards family life during the 1880s in the big Bulgarian cities with the fact that the educated abroad or at home officers and intellectuals could not find a spouse with a proper upbringing and culture. The stories of the newly married couples, which cannot find the imagined happiness, encourage celibacy. Journalists, lawyers, officers, and politicians from different politic and social circles in South East Europe were also considering the inequality in upbringing and education between the two sexes to be the reason for unhappy marital life. But they supported the education of women to the extent, to which they could become worthy partners of their educated husbands at the building of family harmony.

Let's read the letter from 1846 which Vassil Aprilov, Bulgarian educationist, wrote to his sister in respect to the choice of wife for their nephew, a student of medicine in Paris.



Postcard sent by a soldier to his beloved during the World War One, Bulgaria

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**Source 1.** *“His wife should be educated,... know how to read and write Bulgarian books, arithmetic, geography, history*

*and a little bit of Greek. Therefore, you should choose a clever, witty girl, with honorable and dignified parents, pretty and nice, and then suggest her father to start educating her in the things above...”*

Why did the student need an educated wife according to the author?

In which fields should women be educated?

Pavel A. Rovinskij, a researcher of the social life in Montenegro in the 19th c., wrote:

**Source 2.** *“All the graduates from the Female institute in Cetinje (the old capital of Montenegro) got married... Some of them got married to accountants or to highly educated men. The number of the intellectuals in Montenegro increased in some spheres of the public and state life. There is a rule for them to get educated wives such as the graduates from the Female institute. Thus the institute performs one of its tasks to prepare for the educated Montenegrins well educated women partners in life... Another important*

*issue is that the educated woman introduces to her home what is absent now, but needed, for the man of culture. Only if the woman and man are on one and the same degree of intellectual development, there could exist total solidarity and understanding...”*

What changed at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century e. g. in Montenegro concerning girls' education?

Guess which the reasons and the aims of the change were.

What do girls and boys learn today?

- at school; at home; from their friends;

Are there any differences in the education of girls and boys today?



Turkey, 1930s

The same tendency appeared in the Bulgarian village. The village bachelors from the end of the 19th century preferred for wives those girls who had been servants because they are “*more educated, more industrious and more orderly*”, as Dimo Kazasov, a well-



known Bulgarian journalist and politician, wrote in his memories.

Thus serving was considered a kind of education and training for girls. The wealthier parents in the village sent their daughters to study the order of the city house, the meals and manners of the citizens. The poor ones sent their girls to serve in order to provide some money for living and to support their families. The earned money very often were the poor girls' trousseau, and what they had learned in the citizen families helped them to find a better spouse.

But there were also, of course, cases when serving became these girls' misfortune till the end of their life because they became victims of offenses, love deceit and sexual violence.

Do you know current situations with similar problems? (not only in your country but in whole Europe)?

Do you know examples of other work ex-

ploitation of young people (e.g. as au-pair girls, in summer jobs today etc.)?

During 1860s the first Bulgarian female organizations defended the need of education for girls in order to fulfil their role of "worthy mothers and worthy partners" of men. In order to conduct this role, i.e. to be "worthy mothers and worthy partners" of men who were already receiving their education abroad, these organizations tried to convince women that financial sources, efforts and labor should be invested in another kind of dowry: spiritual wealth. The women of these organizations were convinced that the time was about to come when the great amounts of dowry and gifts would not be treasured as much as education and enlightenment.

Discuss with the whole class: What is more important: a great dowry, a good education (and what education?) or both? Find arguments from history and from present time to back up for your opinion.



Women's amateur theatrical play in Szabadka, Subotica, 1914



It is clear that the dominant perception of the female role in the 19th century was that of a mother and a proper partner of her husband. The first female organizations adapted their activities for women's education but only considering their family roles. Therefore their educational policy was directed towards inciting qualities that corresponded to the ruling ideal of woman during the patriarchal and early craftsman 19th century. The girl was to be turned into "meek, nice, neat and obedient maiden" and after that into a mother, a saint, devoted to the family, husband and children. This ideal influenced girls's attitudes to their own bodies and their public behavior.

Let see the notes of Rovinskij about the educational influence of the Female Institute in Cetinje, founded in 1869:

**Source 3 .** *"In recent times some freedom in the attitude of men towards women has appeared in Montenegro, although the women understand and accept it in a different way. Some of them like it because they feel free, and others stick firmly to the old Montenegrin opinion on these relationships. The graduates from the female Institute in Cetinje are from the last ones. Sofia Petrovna educated them extremely in puritan spirit. They are not impressed by wealth and noisy entertainment... The domestic coziness is above every other pleasure for them... I know a Montenegrin who is a graduate from this institute. She married a man with high education and high status in the politic world. He is rich and lives in a city in middle Europe, where life is blooming. She enters the high society together with her husband. She is pretty and well educated and leaves a good impression in this society. She could have a nice place in that society but spends her time at home with the narrow circle of her husband's friends."*

How did the graduates react to the change of the male ideal of women? Did they agree?

What were the reasons some Montenegrin women to oppose to such changes:

- no interest in intellectual things;
- a changed behavior was not accepted by the society;
- a changed behavior was not accepted by themselves;
- the husband didn't allow;
- their peer group (other girls and boys) didn't appreciate;
- women were not enough educated;
- parents didn't appreciate.

The female place in the society was still determined by her role in the family as mother and tutor of children, runner of the private farm, spreading around love and gentleness.



Isabela Gruici, 1897, Romania



Wives were equal to husbands in the organization of the family economics and farm. Very often women had greater influence in managing the household than men.



Banat, 1920s, Romania

What was the position of the grandmother in the family? Who was more important, the grandfather or the grandmother?

Do you know other examples where women had this kind of role in marriage (sometimes also due to male absence during wars)?

Nevertheless, women had proved their abilities as managers of the family farming and housekeeping they were excluded from the spheres in which the law, material and economic bases of the social life was founded, till the end of the 19th century. Women had no place and rights in the public life. They were represented by their husbands or men-relatives (fathers, brothers, uncles). Therefore women received no franchise rights and the opportunity for education and professional realization that could make them equal to men in the public life: engineers, architectures, traders, lawyers in the newly formed national states in South East Europe.

No matter that the rights of the Bulgarian women according to the "Trade Law" from the 1980s of the 19th century guaranteed her the possibility to conduct this activity if she had her husband's approval or if she was a widow and had inherited his business. Despite these rights the Bulgarian woman was rarely a trader because the society did not support or encourage such women's activities. At the same time the law suggested this activity for the married woman, whose guarantee in the society was her husband's agreement.

The outlook of women also depended on their role and the morality expectations of society. Modern beauty ideal didn't exist and that is why for example during the 19th c. the paleness and wrinkles on her face were not a problem for her self-confidence. Because her wrinkles were considered to express her maternity and martyrdom, they were highly esteemed by the society. In the 19th century the physical beauty was connected with the virtues

**Source 4** . *"My grand grandfather was a simple man", wrote the Bulgarian politician and diplomat Mihail Madjarov in his memoirs, "and managed only the outside work: buying cotton and selling the production, but my grand grandmother did all the rest. She controlled his money, did his accounting, managed his working shop and dealt with the craftsmen work as well as the trade... But there were other cases - my grandfather the priest M. was a contrast to his father. He managed not only the church and outside work, but also that work that at the time was considered feminine..."*



of patriarchal society: goodness and assiduousness. “Beauty” was linked to the notion of lively and physically healthy body as well as to the goodness and assiduousness of the girl that guaranteed the educating of the children, neat, clean home and a prosperous farming. The French traveler Xavier Marmier who had traveled around Montenegro in the middle of the 19th century wrote:

*“... the Montenegrin girl loses her youth freshness because of her way of living, her face gets sunburned and wrinkled very early, but her body is fabulous.”*

It was more important for women to be able to do physical labor which “can be endured only by an absolutely healthy body”. In his travel book, named “High Albania - A Victorian Traveler’s Balkan Odyssey”, Edith Durham pointed out:

*“Women’s work in such a house is extremely heavy. They have scarce an idle minute save when sleeping. They fetch the firewood and all the water; and as they tramp to and from the spring with the heavy water-barrel bound by woolen cords to their shoulders, they spin or knit incessantly. They weave and make all the elaborate garments, doing the wonderful black braiding of men’s trousers according to traditional patterns. Even the braid itself is hand-plaited in eight threads over a half-cylinder of basketwork, which the plaiter holds on her knee, tossing the clicking bobbins one side to other, and pinning up the finished braid with swift dexterity. Dozens of yards are needed for one costume; but it is a work of art when finished”.*

- What kind of hard work did women to do ?
- What other hard work can you imagine?

• Here were described typical female seasonal works. What season was the author speaking about? And what work do people do nowadays in this season?

• What do you think men did in this season?

The woman was required to be healthy and strong, to have meek character and to provide the continuance of the kin. These notions of



Peasant Mother, West Rhodopy, Bulgaria

woman: mother, housewife and comrade determined the attitude towards the feminine body: it became a source of physical health and beauty, providing the continuance of the family. That is why Xavier Marmier, a French traveler on the Balkans in the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, underlined in his “*Letters to the Mediterranean and Montenegro*” .



**Source 5.** *“ These dignified women are steady and can be relied upon. They are grown rigorously from their childhood in the rigorous school of labor and assiduousness. Our storytellers should think of an extraordinary story to put them in some kind of love scene where they are spreading lilac, sank deep in golden rays and clouds, and in their imagination and dreams. The romantic love in this lands of divine nature is an exception and even in the folk songs it is a miracle. A mistake, called in the world of civilization mistake of the heart, that makes some mocked at and others felt sorry about, here is a deadly punishment...”*

What was the real situation of women in Montenegro according to the author and what was the attitude to romantic women and love?

What did reality demand from the physical appearance of women and what did the romantic ideal?

For example the choice of a wife begun with the survey of the girl's body and as the descriptions of the everyday life during the 19th c. explain us “if there is a public bath in the village, it is easy to know whether there are any wounds on the maid's body”. Thus the ideal of the “beautiful”: healthy body, good nature, mild character and nice outlook - was born.

A progressive step on the way to the healthy body and also to subduing the sufferings of the female body was the managing of the fear and shame that defined the relationships between the patriarchal man and woman and their own bodies. This fear and shame did not allow acquainting with the bodily pains and sufferings and showing it to a outside look e.g. of a doctor. Only the local medicine woman and the old quacks had access to the ill body in the patriarchal world. The revealing of the secrets of the

female body and the discovering of the body as a biological and physiological organism in Bulgaria started on the pages of the newspaper “Female world” from 1888 on. The ideal woman now had to know much more about her body



Bulgarian Family, Trojan, 1880s

and how to keep it healthy. The articles in this newspaper were signed by “Your Granny”. Her figure continued to embody the notion of competence, knowledge, power and authority till the end of the 19th century.

So, during the summer of 1888 „Your Granny“ tried to make it popular in the newspaper, „reviewed by women for mistresses and misses“, the means of the contemporary medicine that could find and examine the different states of the female body. She encouraged the





Health counseling of the mothers in the village, Macedonia, 1946

women to visit „female doctors“-gynecologists. Of course, the newspaper policy was to turn the female body into a living organism, conducting its basic social functions: continuation of the kin, giving birth and raising children. Women were to overcome the shame and fear from their own bodies, to realize the advantages of the scientific methods in comparison to those of the folklore medicine. All these influences lead to the decrease of high female mortality at giving birth, so typical for the whole 19th century.

Mortality at birth was relatively high during the whole 19th century and it remained a significant biologic and social trial for the female body. Here is such a description from Xavier Marnier written in 1854:

**Source 6.** „The Montenegrin women will continue her long walking or some of the house work even when she is to be a mother. She is

*taught that it will be just a moment even if she is in the field, far away from any help or support, alone with her pains and exhausted from her efforts. All will happen very quickly, she will wrap the child in her dress and carry it home. If she gets sick, she should patiently suffer the pain till God feels merciful to take her life. There is no doctor and no pharmacy.“*

**Source 7.** *“Then she remembered the third one, Katerina, and the day of her birth. When the soft and warm night evening made the colors of the plum tree invisible, she felt the first pains. Then she got scared. She was scared because she was alone at home, alone in the bay, alone in the whole world. People are so lonely in front of the death. Then she understood that everyone comes to this world as a lonely and naked being .*

*When Apostol came, she laid her hands into*



his as of her husband. When it became dark she started to wrinkle from pain. She cried and prayed to give birth to a boy.

-Pray God, Apostol!, she screamed from pain, Prey to be a boy!

-I will prey for you!, he grabbed her hands, not knowing whom to pray.

- Why should I prey for a boy? I do not care. I want you to survive the suffering...

-Pray for a boy, in order not live my life of a dog!

-A girl, said the grandmother and sat her fat ass on a chair.

-A girl, she cried helplessly. She laid on her wet pillow. She felt sorry for herself and the new woman, who was just born to continue her suffering”.

Y. Yazova, Bulgarian writer of interwar period; “War”.

1. Let's remember the changes that appeared in the social perception of the women virtues.

2. Who were the carriers of these new perceptions? Why did not they consider it enough for the woman to be just a good housewife?

3. Which was the dominant notion of the woman in this period? What were her positions in the borders of her home?

4. How did the basic notion of a wife and a mother influence the perception of female beauty?

5. What were the demands from the female body during this epoch? Why was the physical strength valued just as the female morality?

**Source 8.** “At this time Neda (the name of the girl, a heroine from a novel) was almost 15. Her hair was silky, blonde... her eyes black as morellos, her lips red and tiny, her face was white and round like a apple. Her face never got sunburned even though she worked all day under the sun. She was thin and tall... She wore nether too long, nor too short bony tails, the way the other girls did. She had measure for

everything... Neda dressed too simply, but too nicely...”

L. Karavelov, Neda, 1868.

1. What was the literary ideal of a beautiful girl?

2. What was the difference between this literary ideal and the „real“ woman?

3. Compare this image with the ideas of the girls from the 1930s about how should a woman look like.

**Source 9.** “The sexy creatures were the permanent theme among the high school boys as well as in the youngsters’ dreams. Except for momentary scenes, caught from a foreign film or seductive color photos of semi-naked ladies, for example, in the American calendar



Bosnian student in the garden

“Esquire”, which was quite popular then, I had not seen a pinup-girl: every boy’s dream. We should not forget that the erotic fantasies of a teenager can be extremely imaginative! Here is the ideal mature woman: she was 25, with jaunty stride along the golden





Sabiha Gokchen, the first woman pilot in Turkey, 1930s

*Sozopolian sand (Bulgarian sea resort), long legs, blond hair, bronze ten and tempting forms."*

S. Gruev, Memoirs. In "Letopissi" 1996/7/8.

**Source 10.** *"I am quite satisfied for being a woman and it will be hard for anybody to prove the contrary. The women who desire to be men do not know what a thing is the woman; how much she costs, which her place in the family and society is, which her aim is, what her present and future are. In the old times, when women had no rights and was in*

*mental darkness, such a wish could be excused because then the man gave no rights to the woman. He imposed laws which were heavy and unjust for her. Also these laws granted him privileges and constituted in the woman disgust towards her gender and the hot desire to be a man who could do everything. The women should never want to be men because men have the advantage to kill one another in battles and deal with trade. They are troubled by codex, scientific magazines and other dry and fruitless theories while we, the women, possess the most honorable and superior qualities. We give birth and direct the first steps and deeds of our children's bodies, hearts and souls; we encourage the great and genius men in there glorious struggles; we sacrifice voluntarily our happiness for the sake of the others'. If we, the women, knew that the prosperity of our motherland, society and families depended on us, that we were the most important cycle of the society, that men became bold and courageous fighters and lovers because of us, we would never want to be men and envy their virtues".*

"A man or a woman", signed by "Your Granny", In the newspaper "Female world". 01.03.1898.

1. Which aspects were important for her female identity? And why did she value more the women's position than the male's one?

2. How did this ideal identity carry the conservative values in the modern epoch? What roles would it preserve for the women?

3. Which of these perceptions will liberal feminism change in order to build a new ideal about the role of women in the society?



# Love and Marriage in Bourgeois Society



Jugoslavia, postcard, 1930s

## Bourgeois Small Family, Romantic Love

At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century capitalist production started to replace traditional family farming and crafts on the Balkans. More young people were looking for work and education in the towns. The new production conditions changed love and marriage, as well. The marital age increased – men who could no longer rely on the inherited property and family support, had to find first appropriate work and earn enough to build a home and support their own family. Often wives had to work as well in order to sustain the family budget.

The period of premarital flirting increased: the feeling of love became valuable in itself; the relations between those in love became more sentimental. The personal requirements for the “beloved person of one’s heart” – manners, character, profession, political beliefs – increased. More often the newspapers were informing about young people “who have committed suicide because of unhappy love”. The patriarchal dominance of men was replaced by the idea of chivalry – male patronage over the “tender half of oneself” and service to the “beloved woman of one’s heart”. The refined behavior of young girls and their ability to make their home a cozy family nest was highly valued. In their spare time young couples socialized more with their friends than with their relatives – they used to go to the movies, on excursions, for walks...

The number of children in the family decreased (2-4). They were no longer expected as useful helpers in the family farming, but were valued because of themselves and as “the nation’s future”. The relationships between parents and children became more emotional, child’s personality was respected – the child’s birthday was celebrated, parents were looking for suitable toys, clothes, schools and friends for their children. Family care for the chil-

dren increased, as well as the price of bringing up a child. The small bourgeois family gained independence from the kin-patriarchal patronage: its primary goal was no longer just the continuation of the husband’s kin, but “the



family happiness”, and “the good upbringing of children” as well.

The family, however, became more dependent on the crises of the capitalist market and the unemployment, on the political ideologies and struggles, on the scientific and technical achievements. The inevitable inclusion of women in the capitalist production advanced their emancipation and professionalisation. Working women became more independent, new perspectives opened in front of them—they could get realization not only as wives and mothers, but also in their professional and social activities. Some of them chose to dedicate themselves completely to the professional vocation and “in service to the nation”. But for most of the wives the work burden was doubled – they were expected to work hard not only at the factory, but at home as well keeping to their traditional role of good wives and mothers. The number of “old maids and bachelors” also increased: these were people who wanted to get married but could not do that because of their high expectations (they had not yet met their “Mr. or Mrs. Right”), or because they did not have secure incomes and could not support a family.

### **Motherhood – Medicine, Laws**

The decrease in birth rates at the beginning of the century started to cause social anxiety. Society saw a way out of this situation in the development of social support for poor mothers, the affirmation of family values, the development of science. It was believed that with the development of genetics, medicine and so-

cial statistics people would finally be able to master their evolution and the national state would rationally plan its population: families would assure the preservation and improvement of the nation by raising an optimal number of physically and mentally healthy children.

The number of children decreased, but the social care for their birth, upbringing and education increased. All marriages, births, cases of child mortality, illnesses were strictly registered. Medicine imposed new health and hygiene norms for children’s upbringing. Births and abortions took place in the hospitals under doctors’ supervision. Abortions were restricted. Child mortality decreased sharply. Life expectancy increased – 54 years for men and 67 for women (Hungary).

Special labor laws supported the birth and upbringing of children. For an example the law for

the protection of pregnant women and women in child birth in Bulgaria from 1905 provisioned 56 days vacation for them and payment of half of their salary, and the law for the social security form 1924 increased the paid maternity vacation to 84 days including also medical and financial support.

The representatives of Christian feminism, which was the official feminism in most of the South-East countries, pleaded for political and educational emancipation of women, but pointed out that the right to professional realization of women should not disturb their realization as mothers. They opposed to the idea of institutional upbringing of children in kindergartens and homes which was promoted by the revolutionary feminists and fought for the right of working women to be provided by



Timisoara, Romania, 1928



the state, so they could bring up their children. They believed it was only the coziness of the home, the parents' love and warmth that could educate in children both morals and love necessary for the nation's progress. Women's professional realization should be appropriate for their female nature and should not interfere with the family values. Women's participation in social life would contribute to its cultivation in the spirit of motherhood and charity. Women's charity organizations started to help for the upbringing and education of "deprived nation's children"- poor children, orphans, immigrants' children, etc.

### **Male and Female nature – Cultivation of Sexual Drives**

At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the hu-

man body – its genes, reproductive functions and erotic feelings became subject to an increased scholarly interest. People discussed not only the social problems of the gender and the family, but started to talk for the first time about "sexuality and sex": new "scholarly" definitions of the biological peculiarities of men and women, their body desires, and erotic actions.

The sexual-health education emerged. The pedagogues were trying to protect young men through magazines and lectures from "the vice of masturbation", which was considered to exhaust the organism and kill the will, and girls - from unwanted pregnancy pointing out to the destructive effects of STD and abortion on the reproductive health of young women.

The differences between the two sexes were underlined and exaggerated as genetically pre-determined and absolute. Female nature was considered as more sensitive and dependent on sexual impulses and desires. The socially useful behavior demanded that women should overcome their sensual nature through the emanating role of motherhood and social charity.

Male nature was considered to be more rational and strong-willed than female: Man could overcome their sexual drives and develop their personality through professional and military service and self sacrifice – for the family and the nation.

At the beginning of the century the small nuclear family – an educated and professional father, an educated housewife and two-three children bonded forever in a love union was affirmed as a national ideal. Family coziness, mutual spouses' fidelity and care for the children's future were considered to provide a shelter against the uncertainty of the capitalist labor market, political conflicts, sexual temptations.

### **The Families of the Poor. Paid Love**

At the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century not only boys



Secondary school student, Bulgaria, 1920s



but poor girls, as well, headed toward the towns - to become housemaids in rich homes or workers, keeping a hope to save money and get a profession or find "the beloved one of their hearts" and marry him. But soon they had to get accustomed to exploitation and unemployment. Many innocent girls became victims of pimps. At the beginning of the century prostitutes in Bulgaria were mainly foreigners, but during the 1920s and 1930s the brothels were full with poor girls from the villages - mainly housemaids (51% of the registered prostitutes in Sofia in 1934 were from the village, 33% housemaids and 31% workers). Miserable life and poor sexual education contributed to the dissemination of STD, which reached a threatening rate. The statistics of examined prostitutes in Sofia showed that 53% have had gonorrhea, and 24% syphilis (1934).

The number of "decent" wealthy husbands who were tempted to search for secret entertainment in the brothels was on the increase. Poor boys who had found their luck in gambling and crimes spent most of their money on indecent women and feasts.

The theme of the cold prudence and cruelty of the capitalist town killing the hopes of romantic love and high ideals and pushing the more sensitive people towards suicide turned into a leading theme for the Balkan writers (Ivo Andrich, Konstantin Pavlov). The disintegration of the family in worker's suburbs - the drunkards' scandals and fights, the prosti-

tution of starving wives and the misery of homeless children - was described in many novels and poems.

During the 1920s and 1930s prostitution, city crimes and the increased number of suicides were accepted as the biggest threat to marriage in bourgeois society. The feeling of hypocrisy of the official ideology praising the family coziness and devotion to the nation was spreading around; new ideas about love and society became popular. Freud and his followers substituted "the almighty and mysterious sexuality" for the genes and social will as the leading force of civilization. The Balkan philosophers and writers started to explain the social tensions and conflicts in the capitalist society with the repression of sexual drives and lack of



Dragan Beraković (Jugoslavia), Bread, 1937

fulfilling erotic life of leading politicians and intellectuals

The followers of Marxism call for a social revolution, which will make love and family free from the "chains of capitalism".



## Sources

### 1. Family picture (Bosnia, 1920s)



#### Analyze:

Describe the arrangement, clothes and expression of the father, his two sons, daughters-in-laws and grandsons. Is this a big patriarchal family headed by the old father with his subordinate sons and daughters-in-law living together in the village?

### 2. A novel (Croatia, 1930s)

“He was a representative of an insignificant factory for stamps with the pompous name “Ekcelsior” and with the insignificant salary of 30 kroni per month. He has been traveling day after day, year after year. When he started he was young, and now his hair is white and he is still traveling from village to village, from town to town with a suitcase in his hand...

...Offering his stamps, he walked into the room of a gentleman who welcomed him cordially. He was a young man who had been married for a couple years and who was now enjoying his life with his young wife constantly

caressing her. In the afternoons, his wife, beautiful, tender, came into the town to meet him in front of his office and they walked along the

High Street, or had fun in the company of friends, and if the weather got cold or it was raining, he – young and in love, joyful – took his bike and rode home for the coat, coming back with a smile of a man in love and hugging his wife...

... And when he saw the nice household, the fine porcelain, the silver dishes, as he felt the gentle warmth of the room, as if some kind of luxury was emanating from every small thing...

(The hostess asks the salesman about his family.)

- Oh, my heart is still free! – and these words were said in such a voice that it was obvious that this man was still longing to give somebody his heart..

- You mean you are still thinking of getting married!? – the hostess exclaimed unwillingly...

Y. Leskovar (1861 – 1949),

Croatia, *Stories*, 1977.

#### Answer the questions:

1. What are the spouses' responsibilities in the young family?
2. What are the relations between them?
3. Why had the sales person not managed to make his own family? Would he have stayed alone in the patriarchal society?
4. What new opportunities for love and marriage does the bourgeois town give?
5. What people were deprived by the new bourgeois social order?

### 3. Political speech of a Christian feminist (Hungary, 1920s)

“When I call the attention of the National Assembly to protecting women’s vital force it is not merely because of women. We, Christian women, view this problem not like radicals, from purely women’s angle, based on class struggle principles, but from the point of general interests. We consider women’s vitality as a source of national vital force. ... If men’s economic interests suffer a loss, harm is done to the women too. But if the woman’s strength is exploited and she sends her children off to life with reduced vital force, that loss cannot be compensated, nor balanced, nor repaired any more... We seek strong men with strong arms, but we can provide this country with strong men with strong arms only if there are strong and healthy mothers”.

First speech by Margit Slachta in the Parliament on 23 April, 1920. In: I. Mona: *Margit Slachta*, 1997.

#### Answer the questions:

1. Where does the concept of “force” used to describe the connection between the nation and motherhood come from?  
- biology, economics, physics, politics, religion, everyday life?
2. How is the nation figured out and why? - as political, economic, religious, biological unity? In kin, spiritual or productive terms?
3. Why are the words “strength”, “strong”, “force”, “vitality” so important for the author?

### 4. Picture, “An afternoon in the garden” (Bosnia, the 1930s)

#### Answer the question:

Have not women lost the traditional calmness and delight in life because of their emancipation?





### Work in groups:

Separate into two groups – the first one should search for arguments about what women and men won from women's emancipation and professionalization, and the second one should search for arguments about what they lost. Organize a discussion.

## 5. Articles (Bulgaria, 1920s)

“The woman is a family heroine, but through her husband and children she has a significant influence on the well-being of society... There he is - a poet or an artist. We admire his works: but do we know the muse that inspires him? Do we know how he reaches this clarity, this warmth and beauty in his works? Let's go to his home and look into his family life – and we shall discover the source of these qualities: they are only the artist's sensitive soul's expression of that warmth, clarity, the whole poetry his family is breathing... How many poetic souls have died only because there has not been a woman by their side to take off the burden of everyday struggles, and manage to keep their refined way of being impressed by the small things and the foolishness of everyday life. “

Our press about the woman.

In: “Christian woman”, 8, 1923

“Children love stories. That is why, never refuse to tell your child a story even if you have to make it up... Be aware of your behavior, your child is watching you - don't contradict yourself. Children are very observant. Be kind towards the housemaid, compassionate towards the miserable. Don't show slaughtered animals to your child. Let love towards every living creature become strong in your child. Later in life children will try to decrease and eradicate all cruelties.

Always think first before saying something to your child... But once you say it – let your child know that it will be as you said, there would be no turning back. That is why, do not ever quickly ignore and reject your child's desires without thinking them over. Whatever he or she wishes for – if it is possible, appropriate, and good – allow it. You should not be your child's enemy, or else he or she will turn against you and start to live a secret emotional life.

Go out with your child in the town or village often enough. Explain everything that he or she asks about along the way. This is very important especially in the period of acquiring the first impressions about life, i.e. between 3-6 years of age.

Advises to the young mothers.

In: “Christian woman”, 2-3, 1923.

### Answer the questions:

1. What are the reasons for wives to take their husbands' everyday burdens?
2. Which fixed gender roles could you find in the text?
3. What is the difference between the traditional patriarchal and the new bourgeois expectations of the woman's role?

### Mark the statements. Back up your choice

Which of the following statements are characteristic of official Christian feminism and which ones - of revolutionary feminism from the beginning of the century?

- Women should be educated so that they can educate their children better and be equal partners of their husbands.
- Women should be educated so that they may achieve personal professional career.
- Women should be organized politically on the national and international level and engage in public debates, so that they can protect their own rights.
- Women's rights cannot be opposed to the rights of men, children and other members of society.



- Women may work for the progress of society not only through political struggle but also more quietly and modestly, into the social foundations – through children's education and the beneficial influence on their husbands.

- Public kitchens, kindergartens and homes should take over the cares for children, so that mothers may have more time for work and for themselves.

- Working mothers should be provided with more vacations and social support, so that they may be able to bring up and educate their children.

- Main purpose of the life of men and women is the professional career and the gaining of more material goods (improving the standard of living).

- Egoism and materialism cannot make women or men happier because they have a more honorable call: self-sacrificing love for the family, nation, humankind.

- All professions are equally appropriate for men and women.

- Women should engage themselves in professions that do not contradict their femininity and maternal calling.

### Organize a discussion:

Which of these arguments are right according to you?

flected in her skin. The way of differentiation that she has undergone is short and still as close to nature as at the beginning of the sex differentiation... The woman uses her skin in the same way as her predecessor did a thousand years ago. That is why in spite of her four late perceptual abilities – hearing, taste, smell and sight, the woman is most sensitive, weakest and most vulnerable sexually through touching. This is the source of the logical interpretation of the established truth, that the woman loves physically strong men, and that the idea of masculinity in her is equal to physical power, not to say to body clumsiness and roughness in man”

Dr. Al Minchev, Philosophy overview, 1941, 5.

### Fill in:

In the popular culture the opposition (man - woman) is often thought as opposition (spirit - nature), (abstract thinking - .....), (self control - .....), (..... - .....), (..... - .....).

### Work in groups:

- Describe: Male prejudices about women. Female prejudices about men. Explain what the sources and reasons for these are.

- Search for examples: popular novels, adver-

## 6. An article on the “scientific” differences between men and women

Bulgaria, 1941

The detachment of man from nature is due mainly to the peculiarities of his sex. He is less connected to the process of recreation and has a lot of time to get elevated on the road of the abstract and the less primitive... The whole sexual perception of the woman, her entire readiness for love is re-



Рекомендациони стручни атели  
Индеса, појасева и прслуна  
**"Graziosa"**  
Кнег. Љубице 8.  
преко пута Риц бара  
Изготвен шаблонски већ индивидуални,  
кајмоторнији кројеви. Овај модерне фасоне,  
последње новост, извешае копа-  
је, већ властни модела. Богат избор у  
материјалу. Трошци се искључиво вајбо-  
ља француска роба. Ношете за про-  
летњу сезону. Примењу се оправке и  
ново фрезарије.  
Цене веома софичне.



### Дамска на знање!

Све прве китијен-  
ски и модни ма-  
дера (поросега за  
йвузину) до сја  
исораја, за сад-  
нуш сјамак и ва-  
бава црела, гаа и  
све прве црелу-  
чиба.

### Посетице Стручки салон мидера

Кр. Милана 14  
(преко буша дзора)

све се дам дуо-  
годишњи стручни  
вод у Француској  
сајсавенице вео  
салона пружили  
најбоље карактери-  
сационе сојид-  
ности и цент бис  
конструкције

Plasiranje erotizma posle I svetskog rata preko reklama kao vid "modernizacije". Oglas Strucnog salona midera, Beograd, 1937.

Erotism was used in the advertisements in postwar time as an expression of modernization, Belgrade, 1937



tisements, movies, songs, which still support these prejudices.

- Search for alternative novels, advertisements, movies, songs, which contradict these prejudices.

## 7. A novel, “The maid”, Ivo Andrich (Yugoslavia)

“Her father (after an unexpected bankruptcy) called her to come close, rose with an effort, caressed her hair as he used to and said in a calm voice:

- Do you know, son, you and I will have to talk. I thought that I would endure and live longer, that it will not be necessary to leave you like that... Your profit does not depend on you only, it depends on other people and a variety of circumstances, but your frugality depends

entirely on you. Towards it your whole attention and all your strengths should be directed. You should first of all kill in yourself all those so-called nobleness, generosity, and compassion.

[...] It was rather unusual in those times, a woman, and even more at this early age to work alone, go around the state institutions and negotiate with businessmen. But her case was thought of as an exception and was accepted like one. Everybody knew well this thin girl with burning black eyes and yellow face, poorly dressed, having no fondness of fashion or any female need to adorn or beautify herself.

[...] And years were passing by. The young woman was prematurely turning into a sharp and capricious old maid who had become obsessed with money, her life passing by between the house and the warehouse, entirely preoccupied with her business, with no entertainment and



Family of a notary, Rumania ,1910s. The third Europe Foundation, Timisoara



friends and without feeling any need for them. Her only and regular going out, which was not immediately connected to her work, was the visit to her father's grave...

(The old maid becomes heartless and thrifty and dies alone in mental disorder).

Ivo Andrich, a famous Yugoslavian writer,  
"The maid", 1978

### Comment:

The capitalist change of social and family relations leads to a change in the traditional ideals of masculinity and femininity. Unusual personalities appear in Balkan literature from the beginning of the century (Yordan Yovkov, Ivo Andrich, Y. Leskovar etc.): "feminine" men – sensitive, dreaming, helpless, especially attached to their mothers – suicidal poets, political utopians; and also the figures of "manly" women – most often the only daughters of their fathers – overpowering wives, thrifty old maids, radical feminists.

### Questions:

- Why is the father calling his only daughter "son"?
- Do you agree with Ivo Andrich that worshipping the capitalist idol of Money and stinginess, especially by women, ruins all human links – friendship, love, family, nation, and makes people unhappy.

## 8. An article about prostitutes (Romania, 1923)

"... Everywhere in the restaurants, cabarets, show places, on the street, and everywhere you look you see these creatures, who, under different masks [...] sell their dirty love and they always offer an unexpected gift to our Don Juans...

The police records provide evidence for talks about 606 prostitutes and cabaret artists who had worked here since 1919. Now, in the broth-



Dear Miss Vitka,  
Nevertheless you don't know me I dare to write you a post  
cart to wish you a Merry Christmas. I wish you joy and  
success. Let s your life be crowned with roses. Please take  
my greetings of the heart  
You fellow tenant: Pavlov Slavcho, Gorna Dgiumaja, 1928,  
Buigaria

els here there are around 50 "girls", about as many as *cafechantant* artists, 40 who work on their own between different hotels and 80 who practice unofficially this profession...

The public garden and bushes along the main boulevard are the main places for the prostitutes who often prefer all kind of decadent things. As the sun goes down you can see couples who get lost among the trees and bushes. In the same places jerks attract simple girls, usually factory workers, because they want to "rent the bushes". There are also some carriage drivers who lure such poor girls to get in and send them to the brothels which are so many in Constanca...". (Article in the paper "Marea Neagră" (Black Sea), 1923).



### Answer the questions:

- Who is responsible for the prostitution according to the author?
- What is the author's attitude towards prostitutes, pimps and clients?

## 9. An autobiography (Bulgaria, 1934)

"In contemporary Europe Bulgaria is a classical example representative of sexual dissatisfaction and a crazy love hunger. The word is about the quickly and unsuccessfully improvised "intelligentsia". But among the common people the picture is also inconsolable. While "male widowhood" in any other European country does not by any means decrease the man's chances of getting married again, in some remote regions of Bulgaria a widower, even being young, has to go from village to village: to look for a wife and consider himself happy if he finds a "fright" every one would run away from to marry him. My heart bleeds for our people when I see in the newspapers pictures of young, handsome boys who have killed themselves because of love. In another place whole dozens of beautiful young girls would be running after them. In this wonderful county on the Balkans they are driven mad by some female clerk, worker or housemaid, spoiled by a number of admirers. The love dissatisfaction unheard of in any other place in Europe destroys at an early stage the nerves of the "Bulgarian intelligentsia". It makes it not only unproductive, but also harmful. The lack of love delight at a young age is the reason for this gloomy picture of the political, social and cultural life of small Bulgaria."

Kiril Hristov, *Time and Contemporaries*, 2001.

### Answer the questions:

In what terms was the author considering romantic love and its consequences?

What was the difference between Bulgaria and the rest of the world?

What was the author's attitude towards Bulgarian intelligentsia? Why?

### Chose: I agree / I agree to a certain extent / I disagree

- Bulgarian men are sexually shy by nature.
- Bulgarian men are sexually suppressed because of the loss of their patriarchal advantages.
- The low salaries and unemployment suppress the erotic life of the intelligentsia.
- Widows have greater chances of getting married than widowers.
- Men kill themselves because of love more often than women because they are much more idealistic than women.
- Men kill themselves because of love more often because they are more irresponsible and spoiled.
- The capitalist society is more adjusted to women's pragmatism than to men's nobleness.
- The fatal women in capitalist society have unrestricted power over insecure men.
- Women in capitalist society are more exploited than men – at the work place, as well as in love and family.

### Comment:

The official bourgeois ideology considered paying too much attention to the sexual drives as unworthy; submitting to the sexual urges was considered as losing self-control, degradation to primitive nature, exhausting body and mind. According to the representatives of psychoanalysis and symbolism of 1930s reflecting on the suppressed but powerful subconscious drives allow people to master them. The problems of social injustice started to be represented as psychological and sexual problems. For their solving individual therapy was required rather than social solidarity and action.

### Answer the questions:

Which drives do you know?



Are there good drives and bad drives? Which ones could be useful?

### Write an essay:

“How we could better master our sexual drives – neglecting them, reflecting on them, using them for a noble purpose, just let them free?”

## 10. An article, the Communist press, (Bulgaria, 1921)

“In her absence of rights the woman shares the worker’s fate. But in her case, this fate is twice harder. Being in a state of economical dependence on the husband, the woman is connected to her master for the rest of her life. There is no way out of her subordination, she finds herself always face to face with her executor, like a victim. And he wants to possess not only her body, but her emotional life, as well.

Marriage was the destiny of the woman, the family – “the holy family” – was supposed to absorb her. But what this marriage and this family – one of the pillars of modern world – actually look like? Nothing else but a two-sided prostitution. Whether Madame (in the brothel) unites the sides or the church sanctifies the union, it is all the same: where selling and buying of a human body exists, there is prostitution. And marriage stands on material considerations, not on personal inclinations: the family is an economic, not a moral unit... We cannot imagine the capitalist world without prostitution: it is characteristic of it as a necessary evil. Without it, as without religion and militarism, it would not be able to uphold. That is why the Christian state supports it and regulates it “.

“The woman and communism”, G. Bakalov, 1921.



Τὰ πάντα πᾶντα ὑποτάσσονται. Ἄνθρωποι καὶ ἀδιάρροτα με, τὸ ἡρωϊκὸν στοιχεῖο ποὺ ἔχουν μέσα τους, βιάστηκαν, τὸν κόσμο, καὶ τὸν θάνατο.

### Fill in:

With a revolutionary zeal the author, communist from the beginning of the century, has turned upside down the basic values of bourgeois society exposing the holy monogamous marriage as hidden prostitution, the beloved husband as ....., the family love as : ....., the personal marriage choice as ....., the church wedding as ....., the coziness of a family home as....

### Answer the questions:

1. Metaphors of what sphere has the author used to denounce the bourgeois family? Why?
2. Can you imagine a world without the material necessity, state, army and family? Is such a world possible or is it just a fantasy?

### Search for examples:

Are you aware of some nonstandard forms of people living together?

### Write an essay

“Life in a rich and rational world without strange fantasies and desires”.



# Work of Women, Work of Men

## Introduction

The division of work according to gender goes far in the past. Some work roles of men and women seem so constant that people have often tried to derive this division from their biological differences or endowed predisposition toward them. Phrases like: "This is not men's work" or "This is not women's work" speak about such popular attitudes. Some work activities and professions are gender marked. Some of them, especially the ones associated with positions in power are often related to the male sex only.

Where are the significant gender-specific differences in work rooted in? Agriculture, which used to be traditional occupation for most people in the past, provided the basis for a more complimentary division between men's and women's type of work. Later on, the process of industrialization made a big part of work activities move out of the home. Housework which was done exclusively by women remained unpaid in contrast to the work conducted outside the house, so it was not valued enough. It was estimated more or less in moral categories such as care, duty, expression of love for the family, a source of joy for the housewife, etc. Along with this, thousands of women from the poor classes of society were forced to work outside their homes, including the newly opened factories, in order to provide a living or to support their families. This turned out to be another source of problems, namely, how would they manage to combine their duties as mothers with these at work?

The third problem was connected with the



Harvest-time, 1930



women's access to the well-paid professions requiring university degrees. The competition there was severe and the restrictions that women had to overcome had been the subject of longtime struggles and debates. Thus women from all social categories were affected by the new situation on the labor market, although in different ways.

Today it is difficult to imagine that during the 19<sup>th</sup> century the working day in factories was extremely long and no difference was made between men and women, and children. Usually social insurance in cases of illness or accidents was not provided. The lack of a labor code was a threat to women's safety and pregnant women and mothers were most likely to lose their jobs. Labor codes, which specifically regulated the conditions of work for women and children, was implemented in the countries of South East Europe at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> and the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In this period different countries introduced

regulations aiming at shortening the working day for women and children, prohibiting the night shifts for them as well as preventing the recruitment of women for positions which were proved to be dangerous to their health. Also, there were some alleviations for women in the last months of their pregnancy and breast-feeding mothers. On one hand the alleviations could be interpreted as a positive development of the legislation regulating women's labor, but on the other, some feminist organizations accepted the prohibition of night shift work - sometimes better paid - and the work in specific industries as new restrictions imposed on women.

### **Working in the Villages**

Labor legislation had not been at all concerned with village women for quite a long time. They had to do extremely hard agricultural work which included also the produce of



such necessities as food and clothes, which were made usually by hand. Knitting and weaving in the household were traditionally done predominantly by women, which did not mean that they were released from doing hard manual work on the field. According to a survey, conducted in the rural regions in the 1930s, chopping wood for the household took about 5% of the women's time devoted to housework. They also had to carry heavy loads: i.e., they were responsible for bringing water home as there was no running water facilities in village areas. Gradually, especially after the First World War, several public organizations such as women's associations, child protection organizations as well as some municipal and state authorities, started to anticipate the problems of village women and their families. Summer kindergartens were opened in many villages at the time of the most intensive work on the fields. With the development of new technologies the introduction of some labor saving facilities relieved the housework to a certain extent. Although, this led to the restructuring of women's labor, it also added of new household chores connected with the maintenance of better sanitary conditions in the house and the garden, taking more responsibilities of the children's education and care for the home comfort and cosines.

### Professional Labor

The development of the state administration and the constant mushrooming of the civil service offices in the South-Eastern countries at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century was accompanied by the opening of office positions that were mainly meant for women, namely typists, secretaries, accountants, telephone operators. During the First World War the percentage of working women went up, but this trend seemed to be controversial and unstable. After



Rose-picking, Ottoman empire, 1860s (F. Kanitz)

the war and especially in the second half of the 1920s the authorities in many countries made attempts to drive women away from their job positions. Laws were implemented according to which women employed in offices were to be either made redundant or were forced to retire. The laws regulating this process in some countries affected also the teaching profession. These laws were in operation until the end of the Second World War and in accordance with them men were given priority when employed as teachers and additionally, their salaries were higher than women's. Inequality was especially recognizable when married women sought employment as they were supposed to be financially supported by their husbands and thus a job position for them was supposed to be of no importance. Most often, it was the prin-



ciple of the financial support of the family that shaped the labor policy of the state authorities and not the qualities or the abilities of the individual for a professional development in a given sphere.

It was in the period between the two wars when women decisively declared their will to have the right of professional choice as part of their future lives. Female students' essays and questionnaires conducted in the 1930s revealed that only about ¼ of them planned to stay at home and become only housewives and mothers. The surveys showed that about one half of the female students were going to continue their studies in the fields of medicine, pharmacy, nursery and obstetrics. In the questionnaires the students shared their willingness to become even pilots, architects and engineers. A great number of them wanted to become lawyers, which at that time was a profession banned for women and which made women's organizations to fight for their rights.

Not all of these plans were successfully accomplished especially after the beginning of the Second World War in 1939. Still they revealed what young women's attitudes to labor in the 1930s were.

### **Socialism and Women's Labor**

In the countries where after the end of the Second World War socialism took over, labor legislation regulating the equality of genders was adopted. The intensive construction of plants, dams and roads needed a lot of work force. This gave opportunity to many young women to enter new professions including



even those of technicians. The images of women working in the field of construction, as crane operators, tractor drivers and machine operators became emblematic of the new socialist regime. The network of social establishments releasing women from the burden of housework or even replacing it, however developed very slowly. In the 1950s and 1960s children of working women were often looked after by their grandmothers usually living far away from their homes. Slow, inconsistent and irregular was the change in men's attitude to the housework, so the essential burden still came on women's shoulders. Despite the pro-



duction of labor-saving appliances and their availability on the market the proportion of the housework still remained high because the demands of the home, in terms of cleanliness and comfort were also increased. The lack of feminist movements and organizations handicapped the possibility for a public debate and restricted the discussions over the newly emerging problems of gender equality in the sphere of labor.

After the changes that took place in 1989 women's positions deteriorated in several ways. At present, women are more often affected by unemployment and the collapse of the system of social care. Moreover, unemployment increases the intercompany competition for job positions and reinforces the rivalry among women of different generations.



The girl-servant (right) is still a little child and plays with the dolls of her master's daughter (left), Bulgaria, 1943

## Sources

*Many young girls in the past had to serve as housemaids in other families in order to support their own families. In the following table and texts you can see how their number had changed and how one such girl experienced her service.*

### 1. Number of paid domestic servants in Budapest

Year	Number
1910	67922
1920	50895
1930	61632
1940	58853

### Questions:

1. As it can be seen from the table, many of the girls worked as housemaids at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> and the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Which social circles did most of them come from?

2. How do you explain the decrease in the number of housemaids during the 1920s and the end of the 1930s? What events took place in Europe at that time?

3. What kind of jobs could the young girls from the poor social classes have?

4. Guess what problems and dangers could the life of a housemaid bring to a young girl?

5. How do you imagine the relationship between the landlady and her housemaid?



## 2. Excerpt from the memories of Neika Doseva (1930s)

“I have been a servant since I was seven. Hunger made me do it. We were three children. Our father could not feed us. We didn’t own any land. That is why he was a shepherd. My mother was paralyzed. They could not take care of us children, so they had to send us as servants. When I was leaving it was as if I had a frog in my throat. I was going to the home of strange people, totally unknown to me. So, I left for the home of the dentist in Balvan to be his housemaid...”

D. Langazov, *It was not a life, but a sad story*, 1987

### Questions:

1. Why Neika couldn’t stay in her family?
2. How did she feel without her family?

3. A big number of poor girls from South East Europe today go to work in other countries. What dangers could they face? Do you know any organizations that try to help such girls?

## 3. Table: Age structure of the domestic servants from Vakarel region (Bulgaria)

### Questions:

1. At what age did the girls from the village of Vakarel become domestic servants?
2. At what age was their number the largest?
3. How long did a girl work as a domestic servant?

Domestic servants	From 10 to 13 years of age		From 14 to 20 years of age		From 20 to 25 years of age		25 years of age and up		Total	
Year	numbers	%	numbers	%	numbers	%	numbers	%	numbers	%
1920	16	11	105	75	17	12	3	2	141	100
1926	24	18	97	72	13	9	1	1	135	100



*Men and women had different occupations.  
You can see some differences in the following tables*

#### 4. Percentage of active working population in Turkey according to the data of the census (12 years of age and over):

Census year	1970		1990	
	Female	Male	Female	Male
Total	100	100	100	100
Scholars, technicians, professional workers	2.40	4.46	4.64	5.48
Administrative, executive and managerial workers	0.08	0.86	0.20	1.36
Clerical and related workers	1.26	2.94	3.74	3.95
Sales workers	0.29	4.80	1.09	7.56
Service workers	0.81	5.48	1.54	8.07
Agricultural, animal husbandry and forestry workers, fishermen and hunters	88.65	53.18	79.74	35.03
Non-agricultural workers and transportation vehicle operators	6.51	28.28	6.22	31.70
Unemployed, seeking a job	-	-	2.83	6.85

#### Questions:

1. In what work sphere is the biggest disproportion between men and women?

3. In what spheres do most of the employed women work?

- among the people working in the professional and scientific-technical sphere

- in the administration and entrepreneurship

- in trade

- in agriculture and forestry

- in transportation

4. In what spheres do most of the employed men work?

5. Which proportions have remained the same since the 1970s

6. What are the trends in the 1990s

7. How would you explain the fact that according to the table the percentage of the unemployed men is higher?

#### 5. Statistics of the number of male and female teachers in Bulgaria

Year	Male teachers	Female teachers
1910	6831	2575
1920	9070	5382
1926	10732	9543

As you can see from the table, the number of male and female teachers in 1926 was nearly equal.

#### Questions:

1. Can you judge which generations were affected by this change?

2. What is the situation today in your school?



## 6. Picture from the second half of the 1930s

### Questions:

1. Look at the picture above. What does it show?
2. How would you explain the comparatively big number of women in this profession in the 1930s?
3. Which professions (e.g. pharmacy) get feminized during the last decades?

## 7. Miksa Falk: Emancipation of Women

In: Women's Profession. Excerpts from the History of Feminism in Hungary 1777-1865. 1999, Budapest, Kortárs, ed. Anna Fábri

"...Our age is an age of emancipation when all chains are shaken off, lowered heads are lifted up and all shackled forces try to break

free... So, emancipation is everywhere, all over the world, in each segment of society. Does the sun of our enlightened age not shine on women alone? Is she alone condemned to take eternal care of her husband's tiny domestic needs, of her children and of her kitchen? Is she alone, in a time of general liberation, at the feast of Freedom's revival, to remain a slave?

Oh no, we do not wish women to be slaves, we only wish them to remain women: that they would not divest themselves of that incomparable ornament Nature had bestowed upon them and we wish they craved not for such adornments that would cease to be adornments on them..."

### Questions:

1. What terms have been used in the text to describe women's situation?
2. Can the household work be compared to



“slavery” and why?

- because it is not paid
- because it is compulsory
- because it is for someone else's benefit

3. A lot of people (men and women) do not view household work as “slavery”. What satisfaction does it bring?

- it is a care for one's own home
- it bears the feeling of fulfilled duty to the people close to oneself
- it is traditionally expected to be done by the woman

4. Make a table of household activities and of the way they are distributed in your family.

1. How has the proportion of women in academic hierarchy changed in Bulgaria? What is the percentage of women at the highest academic levels?

2. How could you explain these changes?

- women do not have ambitions in the academic sphere
- women face difficulties in their academic careers, because they have obligations with the household work and with children's' upbringing
- women advance with difficulties in the academic hierarchy because of the prejudice against women-scholars
- women are more suitable for art work than for scholarly work

3. In what spheres of science is the percentage of women the highest?

4. How would you explain this stratification?

- by tradition
- by the specific attitudes of men and women toward particular professions
- women are admitted more easily in these spheres of science that need less investment

*Look at the table you can see the Gender stratification in the academic sphere in 1987-1988 including types of institutes of higher education and scientific positions*

**8. Table (Bulgaria)**

Type of Institution		Total	Female	Full Professor	% Female	Associate Professor	% Female	Assistant Professor	% Female	Lecturer	% Female
<i>Universities and Teacher Training</i>	Total	3,091	42.2	238	7.6	628	28.3	1,407	54.5	818	41.7
	Female	1,304		18		178		767		341	
<i>Economics</i>	Total	1,181	36.4	103	3.9	282	19.9	551	37.6	245	66.5
	Female	430		4		56		207		163	
<i>Technical</i>	Total	5,631	25.5	351	4.8	1,158	16.2	2,352	29.6	1,770	30.1
	Female	1,433		17		187		696		533	
<i>Medicine</i>	Total	4,224	46.5	187	13.5	387	23.5	2,416	48.8	1,234	54.0
	Female	1,962		25		91		1,180		666	
<i>Agriculture</i>	Total	537	28.9	116	7.8	115	20.9	219	26.9	123	51.2
	Female	155		9		24		59		63	
<i>Arts</i>	Total	916	51.1	113	22.1	126	38.9	159	50.3	518	60.6
	Female	468		25		49		80		314	
<i>Sports</i>	Total	325	28.9	24	16.7	57	35.1	162	24.7	82	36.6
	Female	94		4		20		40		30	
<i>Total</i>	Total	15,941	36.7	1,132	9.0	2,753	22.0	7,266	41.7	4,790	44.1
	Female	5,846		102		605		3,029		2,110	

Statistical guide for higher and college education in Bulgaria, Sofia, 1989.



*The fact that women couldn't get qualified work seems to be quite "old" but even today and more and more today- after the change of the political system - we can see such situations*

### **9. Excerpt from the interview with Tatiana Bora, 33 years old, Romania**

[...] "Yes, I am a mine worker. I never worked down under in the mines, but helped to design the galleries and did several jobs in the mine over more than 16 years. I always felt like I was a mine worker. It was my whole life from the time I got out of school. It was really the only life we knew here in Jiu Valley. But I lost my job there in spring of 1998. I was made redundant. I don't have a job at Lupeni mine any more.

I was confident when I first left the mine. I wanted to try something new. I wanted to work in the radio and TV station. They told me there was a job there and I applied. There was a job all right and I was qualified. But they said when I applied I was too old. For women in Romania today, if you are 30 you are too old. You might as well not even bother to look for a job. You go in and ask for an interview and they tease you about your age. They only like young women. Probably they know they can push them around more if they are just young. But also they like very pretty women. It is that way all over Romania. They want thin women too, and my husband says I am a little bit too heavy to get a job, maybe. But I have lots of skills and I work hard. I can use a computer some. I would have been good at the radio and TV station. I have a good voice for talking on TV, I think. Anyway, that is over with. The mine is over with, and the other chances are over with.

I am lucky because I found this job with the Agency for helping the unemployed mine workers. I feel like I am helping in a small way. But you know, there is not much any one can do here. You can try though. I do that. I try to



B. Andreević, Soup kitchen N 4, 1936 (Jugoslavia)

cheer people up and encourage them. But life here is very sad.

In Bucharest there are more jobs but they say right in the newspaper: "Women over 30 should not apply." They say things like "Women who apply for this job must be attractive and young and look good in western clothes." [...]

Judith R. Dushku, Romanian women tell transition tales: oral stories of Romanian women of the post-communist decade: E.Tacheva, I.Nedin: She on the Balkans, 2001.

### **Questions:**

1. What is the occupation of Tatiana Bora?
2. How did she feel about her occupation?
3. What are the reasons for her discharge?
4. What kinds of women are privileged according to her?
5. Do you know similar cases?
6. What kind of decision can be found for those who are left without a job because of the plants closing down?



# Leisure and Beauty in Modern Times

In the former chapters we learned about the restrictive norms of gender relations in the patriarchal society of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, about the control of all kinds of contacts between girls and boys, about traditional values like family integrity instead of “marriage by love” and so on. We also saw that there was a gradual change in these norms, caused by the change in the value system of the “ideal woman”, regarding her education, social activities and relationships between genders.



Stefan Danailov in the “Two Guitars”, 1969



Women rowing on the Adriatic sea 1890s

### Women at Work

The neglecting of the patriarchal restrictions was connected with the transition to modernity and the imposition of new bourgeois morality in the new places of work and social life. Women entered the factories as workers. Some of them got career opportunities, traditionally considered to be male: doctors, engineers, lawyers and architects. The relationships between men and women and their attitudes to their own bodies changed, especially after the First World War. Women started to communicate with men in work places freely. They were involved in legal relations with the state. Their bodies performed things, connected with specific skills. Their demands for healthier bodies were greater. Women started to dress according to the latest fashion. Their clothes and hairstyles had to be convenient for work in factories and not to threaten their life. For example, the dan-

ger of entangling one's long hair in the machine could be lethal. The rhythm of work and the new manner of living required more speed and freedom in women's movements, trams, trolleys, and popular sidewalks demanded shorter dresses thus parts of the ankle were to be exposed.

Of course, this process of allowing women to work out of home was long-lasting and therefore Dimo Kazasov, a Bulgarian journalist and politician from the interwar period, wrote:

*"The appearance of female servants in the cafes was a great surprise for men in Sofia".*

Let's imagine what a sensation the appearance of women in the lawyer's, doctors' and workers' clothes must have been.

The First World War accelerated the process of public tolerance and state acknowledgment of female professional labor. While men were fighting and job positions in shops and public



administration were free and women were employed. Widows had to earn their living and they needed jobs and activities outside home. This was the time when the first women conductors and women in trousers appeared.

**Source 1.** *“Women in the old times carried the burden of doing everything in the house alone or with the help of servants. Today, however, things are different. With the help of the sewing machine the Bulgarian woman could sew white shirts for her husband and all her children for a week and the bread costs 25 stotinki in the shop nearby. Old people were right to allot to women only the housework because she would have the time to do anything else. The old people had apprentices to help them because the housework included working the land as well. Therefore they were allowed to buying slaves. Then steam and electricity took over. They made the most tedious work easy and they produce five times faster than man does. Machines do not get tired and do not need a rest. They replaced manual labor.*

*Today spirit is of greatest importance and the machine provides the strength that can be equally controlled by both men and women. Machines make work simple and easy so that a clever and skillful woman who knows how precious time is can manage the housework for two hours no matter how many children she has. Meanwhile she can do something to earn extra money to help the family budget, especially in cases when the husband is lazy or ill - something that happens often. Many women do so and they should because nowadays 50 or 100 leva per month are not enough. But men should help too and let their wives work instead of letting them befriend people who can harm them.”*

*“The woman as a housewife, craftsman, scientist”,  
an article of “Your granny’s”;  
In “A Woman’s World”, 1898/3.*

• What was the new development in female work at home? How was it before, how at the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> to the 20<sup>th</sup> century? Which period is called “old”?

“old”	19 <sup>th</sup> century	turn of the century
farm-servants and apprentices helped in the house and on the field		

• What consequences did this development have for the everyday life of women and of the whole family?

• What did “Your Granny” expect from men and why?

• How is it today? What do you expect from women and from men in the household and in work outside the house?

**Source 2.** The development of female work affected the legislation as well:

Law for hygienic and safe labor, 15 June 1917:

*“(Working hours): article 18. The daily working hours shall not be longer than 8 for the children of both sexes under 16; 10 hours for women of any age and boys under 18; 11 hours for men above 18.*

*(Maternity): article 20. Defense of the pregnant: 8 weeks maternity leave with half the salary. They cannot be dismissed.”*

• What gender relationships did this law reflect?

• Try to depict a working day of a man and a woman.

• Why was it so strange for people in earlier times to see women as workers, accountants, doctors, lawyers etc.

• What distinguished the women’s behavior in these roles in comparison to that at home?



At the same time when technical progress changed the working situation in the household, the First World War influenced the overcoming of the shame we talked about in former chapters, because, for instance, in the hospitals and during administering immunization against contagious diseases the masculine body was entrusted to women-nurses and was undressed before their eyes. The first soldiers' reactions, for example in the Serbian army, were to refuse to undergo these manipulations but the surviving instinct was stronger and dealt with the social instincts much faster than public norms. Life in trenches strengthened the sense of personal hygiene and the need for body comfort: the soldiers' letters displayed how strong the need for soap and the removal of lice had become.

But there were also conservative voices against the female presence on the battlefields:

**Source 3.** *"A soldier hates to see a woman in the battlefield, because he thinks a woman can cause trouble and he cannot bear the beauty of women being destroyed in battle. This superstition has a good reason. Numerous cases prove that. This phenomenon is explained by the fact that a sexually active sol-*

*dier is less capable of fighting and less careful, because his senses are not so sharp, as they should be. He is therefore in greater danger than his fellow fighters. There are numerous examples of soldiers and officers, who mysteriously died right after spending a night with a woman.*

*In 1912 and 1913 this superstition of sol-*

*diers was so strong that we almost had no problems, and sexually transmitted diseases almost did not exist. The whole world was fascinated by the morality of the Serbian soldier. In 1914 and 1915 this morality was, due to this particular situation, slightly corrupted, but it appeared again on Thessalonica's front. Soldiers were faced with the charitable presence of British and French ladies, admired their morality, as they admired theirs, loved them*



Dancing in war time, World War Two

*in a brotherly manner, but without breaking the rules of honesty and morality. When recruiting a new army we have to renew the presence of morality and to remove sins."*

D-r Vladimir Stanojević, Exerts from my War Diary, in D-r Vladimir Stanojević, "History of Serbian War Sanitary Trial", Belgrade, 1992.



- What was the consequence of female presence on the battlefields according to the author?
- What kind of roles should women play in war according to the author, and why?
- Where in the text can you find proofs of the old prejudice?
- Make a summary of the political and military events in 1912/13 and 1914/15.

Here is another example for the change in relationships between women and men, this time during the Second World War:

**Source 4.** *“Let’s talk freely! Said the young woman and shamelessly let David take off her shirt.*

*Alexander was surprised that something like this was taking place in front of his eyes. He turned his face. When he saw that his two comrades were just cleaning and bandaging the woman’s wound and were not impressed by her nakedness, he dared to look at her. His heart shrieked of pain when he touched the dirty and bloody shirt of the young woman, when he saw her unclean breast and sun-burned neck. This thing is not for women, he thought sadly.”*

Yana Yazova, Bulgarian writer from the inter war period, “War”, 2000

- What in this text give you a reason to think that the Second World War totally changed the relationships between sexes?

### Friendship between Women and Men

Not only work and war but also balls, restaurants, opera, cinema, exhibitions, political and social clubs, sports and travel agencies, places for recreation and vacations, leisure time (parks, beaches, baths, picnics, mountain camps etc.) enhanced the communication between the sexes. The touching of the bodies, walking hand

in hand, the free talks, the friendship between men and women in public, which were impossible in the patriarchal times, became the norm in bourgeois everyday life. As Stefan Gruev explained in his Memoirs:

**Source 5.** *“Friendship outside school was satisfactory and it was blooming primarily on the beaches of Sozopol and Varna and in the villas in Chamkoriya (Borovetz) - famous places for swimming, skiing and excursions during these carefree years. When we went back to Sofia we could hardly wait until weekends came to continue our new relationships and flirting at the tennis courts and the Boris Garden or at the public swimming pool “Dianabad” or at the first dance clubs that were introduced recently.”*

Stefan Gruev, Memoirs; In: ‘Letopissi’, 1996/7/8.

- Where did friendship outside school spring up? And why did it work so well outside school?
- How is it today? Where do you meet new friends?

Managing the complex rules of body performance in ball rooms demanded new culture of movements. The special ball gowns only allowed women to show in public discrete parts of their neck and/or hands. Therefore the new culture, linked with the preparation of dressing, dancing skills and the new outlook and behavior, which were achieved through long lessons outside home neglecting the traditional role of housewives and educators of their children, met the resistance of conservative male opinion. The Bulgarian newspaper “Patriot” in 1889 demands brothers and fathers to be very careful with the preserving of the moral values and dignity of their sisters and daughters.



**Source 6.** *"We were ashamed to look at men and women; and now we are so... Why should we desecrate marriage? There are some reasons that led us to this situation. They are: first - luxury and free communication between genders, the present education which turned to be a sudden and unexpected change that became hazardous to domestic life. Second, ball rooms became particular places where women lose their humbleness".*

"Marriage and Celibacy", "Patriot", 1889/12.

- How did this newspaper judge the change in the relationship between the genders? Can you guess what were the political views of the author?

Here is another example of opposing the balls:

**Source 7.** *"The horo is our folklore. We all know it, and there we are free and equal. Clusters of people gather together with small or no difference in the outfit. The ball is so different from our horo that, considering our education, it helps loosening up the relationships between men and women and for the preparation of virgins for mothers and wives who are not positive and serious. There is something so shameless in the attitude, dancing and looks of our women and girls, that we can say something even worse than what Matey Arnold said about American women. Many of our women are not humble in terms of supporting the new freedom in relationships and interactions between genders so that passion and decency stay in their right places. What can be spotted at balls is also present in walks in parks and at the dances and everywhere we want to look more free and more European".*

"Ball and Horo", "Patriot", 1889/April.

- What did the author criticize?
  - leisure activities in general
  - the looseness of relationships between women and men
  - women in general
  - the new freedom of women
  - men who are visiting balls
- What were the "right places" for women according to the author? And why?
- What threat did "conservatives" see in balls? Which were the traditional values and gender roles threatened by the culture of balls?
- Which were the other places, where the traditional gender roles disintegrated?

For the same reason Vladimir Gachinovich (young Bosnian socialist in turn of XX th century) in his essay about Zerajic criticized a few girls from Bosnia studying at European universities, because they followed their colleagues "in their scandalous life in cafes". Therefore the cafes in the central part of the cities were primarily for males in the mornings and are visited by women in the evenings. The important in this case is the presence of women in places



Seated Ladies at a ball celebrating the Day of Independence, 9.10.1928





Sofia, 1930s

that were traditionally male. Of course, this practice gradually disappeared after the end of the First World War and it was simply a distant reminder in the 1940s. At the same time the places for entertainment were divided not into male and female, but according to class principles. Workers, bourgeois and servants had separate places for entertainment.

- Do you know separate places for girls and boys, for women and men or for different social groups in other periods, in other countries that exist today? Give examples.

### The New Culture of Leisure Activities

This situation changed after the First World War, in the 1930s and 1940s with the turning of the cafes, cinemas, mountains, rivers and summer pools into common places for entertainment. Here people got rid of their clothes and problems or, as reporters of that time wrote: *“The bathing suit erases the class differences, underlined by the clothes and everyday life outfits.”* That is how a reporter from Sofia reflected this change in the morality and the attitude towards the body:

**Source 8.** *“Not long ago it was a sensation to see a girl in a sportswear. Some years passed and women became witty and started calling the pants ‘shorts’ and now they feel at home in shorts. The bathing suits that reached the knees, now cover only some parts so that the body receives more sun and air. And bathing in the sea? The beach in Varna was created thanks to the argument that ‘foreigners wanted it’. It was unbelievable for us to wish for something connected with sun and air. We bumped into the wrong notion of morality. How did it happen that air and sun are nowadays something regular, yearned for and free? The voyage along the Iskar river also contributed to this. The flow to the ‘Maria Luisa’ pool then followed. People wanted air and sun, the municipality gave these places to Sofia!”*

“Air\*Sun\*Water”, by P. Spasov, 1940.

- Why was it a “sensation” to see a girl in sportswear?
- Ask your parents and grandparents whether they had similar experiences in their youth, concerning one’s clothes, hairstyle, behavior?





"Maria Luisa" pool, Sofia

- What did "air and sun" mean for the people before, what at the turn of the last century and what does it mean for people today?
- Why was it not always "positive" to have a bronze tan?
- What does this mean for the modern beauty ideal?

This is the time when sunbaths were advertised as healthy and useful. The theme of skin cancer was still unknown to medicine, although this was the time when protective creams appeared, promising a good tan. Beach culture imposed the new idea of beauty of men and women: 'a sunburnt body physically strong from the swimming and exercises'. It was imposed by the "Beach Queen"- contests there have been filmed since the 1940s and the demonstrations of jumping from towers as well. Here is what the film by Spas Todorov reflected: "The choice of the queen of the beach in Luzhin" (South West Bulgaria) in 1940: photos at the beach, the walk of the queen of the beach accompanied by German songs. This new conception

imposed the image of masculinity and femininity, characterized by athletic bodies and "long legs, blond hair, bronze tan and tempting forms", depicted in the memories and advertisements from that time. This ideal for masculinity and femininity incited identity crisis in teenagers who were far away from it. Here is such an example by Stefan Gruev in his "Memoirs":

**Source 9.** *"Then I spent hours eating her up with my eyes as a hungry puppy, torn by doubts and desires. At that age I suffered from painful complexes: while my school peers were growing up with masculine bodies I was still a pale and fragile child. I feared that no girl was going to look at me in my bathing suit and that is why I never did take off my shirt when we were at the swimming pool. This summer nothing else could depress me more than the beautiful, well-built young men around this attractive lady."*

S. Gruev, Memoirs...



• What was the biggest problem of this boy in his leisure time and why?

The first magazines and newspapers that advertised bathing suits and sportswear suggesting specific gender styles, appeared in the 1920s and 1930s. Flirt, love before marriage and adultery were among themes that appeared often on the pages of the magazines. They were subject of satirizing and were ridiculed, but gradually they became a decadent rebellion against the ruling conservative norms of gender relationships often defined as bourgeois hypocrisy. The Bulgarian sound film "The Resort of Varna and the Rest Houses" was produced in 1932. "Attending resorts" became as a fashionable life-style. Of course, the summer seaside resorts and the winter ski resorts remained a privilege for the middle and upper-middle classes of the society. But walks, picnics, sun-bathe at the rivers remained preferred entertainment for the rest of the population.

In practice, the culture of spare time helped definitely the creation of public places for entertainment, where the freedom of communi-

cation between men and women was common. Contacts between youngsters in cafes and clubs, where they met and fell in love with young beautiful girls from the lower classes, became a nightmare for their parents. But, as Avdo Humo writes about Bosnia: *"When I was boy this topic was much discussed at home and at family meetings, which were very frequent. In my youth, at the beginning of 20<sup>th</sup> century, there was hardly any public cultural life in my town. Those family meetings gave the rare opportunity to exchange every sort of information, ranging from economic, political and intimate to various gossips"*

The culture of the leisure beginning of this century was an exception rather than a rule. It was mainly influenced by:

- The implementation of laws defining the working hours that led to a progressive decrease in the length of the working day and week;
- The progress in medicine, enhancing the positive role of tourism, fresh air and rest for the human body;
- The state social policy, which supported the provision of hygienic work conditions and provided for places for a rest and entertainment;
- The consideration that entertainment could be regarded as a cure against the dreads of the First World War that undervalued many of the traditional values of the older life-style, which resisted the ideas of having pleasures and obliged people to devote themselves to work and family only;
- The boom of the travel agencies as a result of the entertainment advertising which turned into a successful business in compliance with the new attitudes towards entertainment.





## Modern Ideals of Beauty

The newly developed leisure and tourism “industry” also contributed to the change in the attitudes towards the human body, to the establishment of new views on beautiful and healthy body, which involved an elegant silhouette for women and strong muscles for men. The wrinkles became a problem and the cosmetics developed into a successful trade. The advertisements of beauty saloons and their miracle effect displayed on the pages of color newspapers had imposed new “sterile” image of the female beauty: a smooth face with no wrinkles, looking fresh and betraying a healthy way of life, which outlooks can be preserved by cosmetics.

- What is the ideal for beauty today?
- What do wrinkles mean for women and for men (in older time and today)?
- Which other beauty “sins” were created within the last hundred years? What is, concerning the ideals for beauty, not “allowed”:
  - for women
  - for men?
- What do you think about the fashionable ideals for beauty?

Cinema has imposed greatest influences on the changing attitudes of the contemporary individual towards their body and communication and thus helping to overcome fear and shame. It was one of the cheapest types of entertainment. Its visual effect and the possibility to provide more complex intellectual implications made movies preferable to the traditional drama. Here is how according to Georgi Georgiev, author of the book “Sofia and its People” film characters influenced lifestyles:

**МАНТЛОВЕ**  
и зимске хаути

по париским и  
берлинским моделима

по солдирским  
ценама

роботе и одела

**М  
Е  
Т  
Е  
О  
Р**

**БЕОГРАД**  
Улица Младенова 29.

**Велики избор**  
зимских капута за господу и даму, као и ен-  
глеских штотофа за дамска хаљина и одела.

**Нарочито леп избор**  
овила и овилених веша, пинжона, кошуља, ма-  
шини, платна, отора, златова, телика нео и осталих  
мануфактура.

Zenska moda u Beogradu za zimu 1936-1937.

Advertisement Belgrade 1936-1937

**Source 10.** “A dandy from the capital differed in his hairstyle from anyone from the country as he had the constant quality of extravagance. He styled his hair in the period before the war and after it. But and especially after the appearance of the sound film, he definitely started to imitate the heroes from the screen, who used to make women sigh. His hairstyle covered the whole distance between the Charles Boae’s brigantine hair to the wild curls of Pal Yavor”.

“The shortcut hairstyle came into fashion at the end of the 1920s The fashion of the styled hair came together with it. The film screen was very influential over the development of the hairstyles, especially of the girls. The public opinion still could not accept a woman with a husband and children to pay attention and change her hairstyle. At the same time girls’ hairstyles ranged from the



*shortcut of Greta Garbo to the careless wild curls of Alida Vali."*

- Describe the change in fashion and styles in these two sources from the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.
- What further changes in fashion (clothes, hair styles etc.) do you know, which "idols" from movies or music bands do you know?

Here is another example of the importance of cinema for the dreams and ideals of young people:

**Source 11.** *"A naked youngster in fashionable pants with zip is sitting at the table nearby. His ID card must read: face - round, no mustaches, no specific marks. He is wearing yellow sunglasses. He is smoking with a carefree pleasure. There are cigarettes, matches, a coffee and a newspaper on the table. It is not hard to understand his hidden thoughts: he is traveling. He may have never been abroad, even to Belgrade (the a return ticket, visa and passport, all this for 560 leva ). He may be an accountant and it must have been hard for him to save money to buy these extravagant pants. But I know he is traveling at least in his thoughts. The films, the two-hour happiness, have given him wings. The film has made him leave his skin shell and now he is not in the open pool area of "Maria Luiza", he is in Munich or Salzburg, at the lake Bled or even on the beach of Lido. There are many like him around. That girl over there is also like him. She is jumping on the terrace because she has seen it in films and she thinks it is 'very fashionable and shocking'. She is laughing with a clear voice. The school-girls who are calling her down seem like children to her. She is a lady in her thoughts. This will not prevent her from saying later on: 'To-day we were at "Maria Luiza"'. It was really*

*nice there and we had a great time"*.

From the "Serdika" journal, Sofia, 1940/6

- What did movies influence these young people?
- What did they dream about? Why was it important for them to have the possibilities to escape from the real world into the world of dreams?

The memories of a 19 year old boy give us another example of the influence of Hollywood on the outlook and behavior of the young generation in the interwar period:

**Source 12.** *"At the age of 19 I had a childish face and was the only one who did not need to shave. Now it may not seem to be a problem, but at that time and in a society, which worshipped 'masculinity' to have no beard was a real tragedy. Forty people used to turn towards my desk with flat jokes while I was blushing and wanted to sink in the ground. The most painful were cases like this. One evening a large group of friends, both boys and girls, went to dance in a nightclub in Varna. The jauntier let everybody in except me. 'Children are not allowed!' he said before the girl I was courting. To make up for the lack of a beard I started smoking when I was in the company of my peers in order to obtain a manly expression. I was holding my cigarette clumsily and coughed all the time, but even this did not help me much to look like Humphrey Bogart."*

- What was the problem of this boy? Do you think that boys in earlier time had similar problems?
- How did he try to compensate for his "problem"? Do you know similar "strategies" exercised by young people today?



According to the statistics, going to cinema had become the most preferable entertainment after the First World War. The records of sound films in cinema archives reveal the fact that the most frequently seen films during the interwar period were love melodramas, adventure and historical films. The policy of the Bulgarian state, on one hand, attempted at limiting the access of pupils to these films, but, on the other, it lowered the ticket prices for some films. These particular films revealed the hard life of prostitutes' or transmitted the danger of thrusting thoughtlessly into feelings and passions, which could destroy youngsters' career prospects and all life. All this speak about the great influence of the cinema over the outlook and behavior of boys and girls during the interwar period.



A girl looking at a film poster

**Questions:**

- 1. What is the difference in the ways the patriarchal and the bourgeois cultures control gender relationships?
- 2. Which were the new places where freedom in communication between men and women was possible and new forms of gender relationships were confirmed?

- 3. Why was the First World War considered significant for the change in the attitudes to the body and gender relationships?
- 4. Why and how the culture of leisure had changed the relationships between genders and created new attitudes towards the body?
- 5. How did the cinema influence gender relationships?

Lets remember again what was the difference between the patriarchal and bourgeois culture in respect to disciplining of one's body.

	patriarchal culture	bourgeois culture
marriage		
getting into contact with each other		
Leisure		
Work		
body "shaping"		



# Politics and Emancipation

## Introduction

The establishment of the modern state and its institutions in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries in Europe and North America; elective government, parliamentary system, constitution, modern army etc., provided opportunities for a greater number of people to be involved in the power structures compared to traditional

societies. Modern political life implies a competition between political parties with different program and strategies uniting a variety of social strata. They organize political meetings and publish their own printed media. The principles of freedom and equality proclaimed by the French Revolution become attractive for a great number of people. The reader has probably noticed the fact that when getting acquainted with political history one does not come across the names of many women. Political activity was associated with the activity and realization of men. Politics appeared to be a field excluding one of the sexes.

This fact is not simply a result of the division of labor between the sexes. We know that political institutions take decisions that define the way of life of all people. They allocate public finance (the state budget), they design new laws that define the conditions for and access to education, labor economic activities, heri-



The Government of Constantin Stoilov, 1897, Bulgaria





tage, social support etc. Many of the decisions of the political institutions impose divisions based on gender characteristics.

There could be people supporting the idea that women preferred to stay at home living a sheltered life, devoted to family and children and were only happy to leave politics to men. Probably this was true for most of the cases but certainly not for all of them especially after the French Revolution. Throughout history we can observe that women were excluded systematically from the political sphere. They were forbidden to participate in political activities or deprived of their political rights. In some countries, e.g. Hungary, in 1848/1849 the election law deprived women of the already granted (although indirectly) right to vote. Excluding women from participation in political life was done not only through legal acts. To a great extent this happened as a result of a variety of ideological arguments concerning women's inability to perform political activities. Many of these arguments can still be heard today. In the second half of the

19<sup>th</sup> century natural scientists were searching for evidence that women were biologically predestined for home activities rather than for social ones. Later on Freud's Psychoanalysis brought up new arguments from the study of the human nerve system and psychological characteristics claiming that women are creatures showing greater dependence on sexuality incapable of deep mental activity and abstract thinking.

### **Feminism**

The fierce debate that was raised resulted in an increase in women's social activities and eventually led to the formation of many women's organizations that began the struggle for emancipation. The general movement is widely known as 'feminism'. However, there is a great variability in feminism and it has never actually been a unified movement. The reason for this is that women belong to a variety of social classes and their political interests are expressed in a variety of ways. Accord-



ing to those who do not know feminism it is just an ideology of the hatred of certain women (most probably neglected by men) towards men. It was recently when a leader of a Bulgarian women's organization when asked if she was a feminist, answered: 'No, no, no a thousand times no. We love men and life in couples'. Actually only few of the most radical acts of feminism were directed against men. Liberal feminism supports gender equality and the idea that people from both sexes are born different but equal and must have equal opportunities in life. Liberal feminism does not reject family as a social structure; on the contrary it asserts it and what is more it calls for equality between the spouses.

Generally feminism analyses the ways women are discussed in society and the power relations between men and women. Feminism teaches us to treat all people first as individuals and raises our awareness in cases of disrespect of personality.

### South East Europe

The region of South-East Europe has its own special historical fate, marked by many sudden political changes and military conflicts which occurred more often than in other parts of Europe. Patriarchal social structures were preserved here. For these reasons society was dominated by men

in a much greater extent. In addition, because of the long-lasting alienation of big parts of the population from the central government (mainly in the conditions of the Ottoman Empire), more or less permanent forms of self-defense were established which contribute to the emerging of images of manhood in which the heroic behavior played a great role. Such men's groups were glorified in the folklore of the Balkans. There were rebels, popularly known as *haiduti*, or other historical groups: *klefty*, *chetnitzi*, etc. In the process of the modernization of Balkan communities, accompanied by fierce social struggle, revolutionary violence and military conflicts, some of these paragons



Macedonian chetniks, 1903



of heroism and manliness were associated with revolutionaries and warriors and influence the contemporary concept for the role of man. Nevertheless, if we look closer at the political development in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, we shall discover political debates concerning emancipation similar to those in other European states.



Women charity activists, 1928

## Women Organizations

The first women's societies in the Balkan countries were established in the 1850s. They did not have any political objectives, their aim being to help women's aspirations to education so that women could become better partners of their spouses and better mothers. Hundreds of such women's societies provided financial support for poor girls to study abroad, opened kindergartens and a wide range of educational courses. Women teachers started to play an increasingly important role as they represented one of the few prestigious professions, which society accepted as suitable for women (at least for single ones). Very often young women teachers were influenced by socialist ideas, one of the reasons being that at the time social democrats were the only politicians who included the idea of emancipation in their programs. As socialists, the members of the Balkan women's organizations had international contacts and there were cases when women teachers, activists of the social democratic movement in one country became leaders of the women's organizations in a neighboring state. This was the case with Stoyanka – Tsanka Yovanović, a

teacher who grew up and got education in Bulgaria and who later on went to Belgrade to become one of the leaders of the women's movement in Serbia.

In the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> and the beginning of 20th century, various women's organizations were established in the countries of South East Europe. Some of the first such organizations were those in Hungary. In 1865 women's movement started there with the publication of '*Women's Manifesto*'. Women in Hungary were granted suffrage /right to vote/ as early as 1919, and in 1922 the first woman MP /Member of Parliament/ entered Hungarian parliament. This was Margit Slachta (1884 – 1974), a representative of the movement of Christian feminism. Christian Feminists pleaded for both: for the specific women's virtues, national and family values and for the women's education and employment.

In Turkey the first women's rights organization was created in 1913; in 1936 the Federation of Turkish Women was founded, which in fact supported Kemal Ataturk's policy and the values of the Republic, as well as the development of women's education and the sup-





Elections in November 1945: "Everybody on the elections"

port of motherhood. Women were granted suffrage for the by-elections in 1930 and for the general elections in 1934.

The common struggle for allowing women access to higher education united Bulgarian women's societies. Bulgarian Women's Union was founded in 1901. The union started publishing its own newspaper "Zhensky Glas" (Women's Voice). In 1903 the women - social democrats left the union proclaiming that it was the socialist state to come that would provide a general solution to all problems of women; there was no use to achieve isolated objectives. In 1910 the union "Ravnopravie" (Equal rights) was created by reformist social-democrats. Bulgarian women (married, divorced, widows) were allowed to vote in 1937.

A lot of feminist writings were translated in all the countries of South-East Eu-

rope which made possible for women to take part in the international debate on women's rights.

In Serbia the emancipation movement was associated with the name of Draga Deyanović (1840 - 1871), a Serbian youth organization activist. She gave lectures on the condition of women in Serbia and called for Serbian women to free themselves from the oppression of men.

In Greece women got the right to vote in 1956. It seems that in many countries suffrage was achieved in a period of authoritarian rather than democratic regime.

### Women and Social Care

From the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> up to the middle of 20<sup>th</sup> century women found in charity organizations the best opportunity for social activities and expression. Speaking about char-





In the 1930s, the protection of children became a common collaboration field for women from all Balkan states. The First Balkan Congress for Child Protection took place in Athen in 1936. Here we see two posters showing the social activity of the Belgrade community presented to the Second Balkan Congress for Child Protection in Belgrade, 1938. They illustrated the ideas of "social motherhood" as a care for all children in society



ity, we usually imagine high society noble ladies giving alms to poor children for Christmas. But in South East Europe charity was managed mainly by the women's organizations. The organizations like Christian, Red Cross, Teachers' societies etc. attracted a great deal of middle class housewives and professional women. Female teachers were the most active in the beginning, later on female doctors, nurses and agronomists got involved as well. Such organizations opened orphanages, homes for old people and for poor children, they used also to provide free food for poor people. In the years of World War One thousands of Red Cross activists took care of wounded soldiers and prisoners of war; and of the graves of the dead ones from the both sides.

In Hungary the social and welfare activities of the women's charity organizations were the first of such kind in the region. For instance, Susana Koshut (the sister of the revolutionary L. Koshut) worked as a nurse in the military hospitals during the revolution (1848-1849).

In Turkey women's charity started with organization founded by Emine Semidge, later it developed into a network of charity organi-

zations. In 1914 the Union for the Protection of Children was founded in Turkey.

The Bulgarian Union for the Protection of Children was founded in 1925. Two years later a special institution was created within the Union called "Women Teachers – Counselors". The girls were trained to manage special social, educational and charity activities in the countryside. Constantia Lyapcheva, the Union's most distinguished activist, believed that the roots of charity were not in almsgiving, but rather in creating honorable human beings. In Bulgaria, in the 1930s out of 6000 activists involved in caring for old people, 5000 were women. The Union of Bulgarian Women opened Higher Social School for Women, qualifying officers for the social services.

Many of the women who participated in charity activities insisted that it was only through their social engagements that they could fulfil their "true woman nature". "The social motherhood ideology" developed stressing the need for maternal duty of women to be extended over the whole society. This ideology was criticized by some feminists as reinforcing the inequality between the sexes, but we should take account of the fact that





A group of Jewish Women from Kjustendil, Bulgaria, 1900s  
Archives of the Jewish Historical Museum, Sofia

many of the skills and a great deal of the experience, acquired by women in the social charity, would later contribute to the foundation of welfare state and of professional social care.

### **The Time of Socialism**

After World War Two in the communist countries of Eastern Europe women were given unlimited access to all political institutions. And even more, women coming from the masses: factory and farm workers, building construction workers, etc. due to their achievements as manual workers could have entered the Parliament, a possibility even unthinkable before. However in the conditions of the totalitarian one party regime, the democratic institutions were formally elective and did not play any significant role. This is why any conclusions concerning the political role

of women in a communist society, based only on the percentage of women in governmental institutions, are unreliable. All former feminist organizations being dismissed the public dialogue on the political roles of men and women broke up. For decades women of communist states were isolated from the emancipation movement behind the 'iron curtain', where the fight for equal rights continued.

The involvement of women in all political institutions did not solve many of their social problems. For instance the extreme restrictions imposed on abortions in some countries /e.g. Romania/ were not opposed by the official women's organizations, which were quite formal and controlled by the government. Many women's organizations even supported those measures.

After 1989, the year marking the beginning of democratic changes in most of South



East communist countries, it turned out that women were the ones to take most of the burden of the transition. They suffered much more than men from the rise of unemployment and the collapse of the state social care system . Many girls become victims of the organized crime supplying the underground West European market with young prostitutes. All groups of women need more information about activities in other countries, they need contacts, mutual support and expression of their own problems. Now different groups of women feel they should raise their voice and make society hear them.

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*Tray to find information about history of women’s educational, political and social activities in your own country. Fill in the table, adding events and names of activists.*



Tsola Dragoycheva, member of the Leadership of Bulgarian Communist Party speaking for a meeting, 1960s

Activity	First half of the 19 <sup>th</sup> century	Second half of the 19 <sup>th</sup> century	First half of the 20 <sup>th</sup> century	Second half of the 20 <sup>th</sup> century
Education for girls				
Women organizations				
First women with university degree				
Women charity organizations				
Political rights				



## Sources

*The organized participation of women in politics dates only from the first half of the 20 century. But there were politically active women in earlier time*

### 1. A novel about the life of Queen Marie (Mary) of Romania

[...] And this young, intelligent, subtle, brave and well prepared for business British princess became the wife of shy Ferdinand... Originally, this was a marriage *a la convenience* and its main aim was the stability of the [Romanian] kingdom and the heirs for the throne.

It was clear from the beginning that the Queen was a stronger character. She has been educated in a family where the model of the grandmother dominated and where women were indeed used to taking care of the household, to cooking and to being real wives. On the other hand, she knew that *noblesse oblige* and she had accepted the responsibilities of a royalty as it had been taught proper in Great Britain.

She immediately started to learn Romanian, a Latin language and to show pride in having a dual citizenship. She was active, almost with no self-restrictions and she developed her extraordinary capacity to influence those she met. On many occasions, her behavior was informal, and, for example, the way to choose the men in her escort aroused gossips although the attitude of the Romanians was closer to the modern permissive society than to that of Victorian England. Except for the scandalous stories, she was very popular. Her position became

very strong during the Balkan War of 1912-1913 when she went to the front line. She worked as a nurse... [and] treated soldiers affected badly by typhus or other infectious diseases.

Romania owed her more than any other politician the decision to join the Allied Powers [the Entente]. The initiative seemed as a compromise from the military and geographical point of view and Ferdinand, was ready to support Germany, but the [...] Queen, fully convinced that England and the Allies will win, showed more influence than her husband. [...]

Leonard W.Taylor, *Regele aurului și Regina Maria, (The Sourdough and the Queen )*, București, 1996.

### Answer the questions:

1. How was Maria educated in her home? What was she supposed to do?
2. When did she start to learn Romanian? Why did she need it?
  - What was her attitude toward the Romanians according to the author?
  - How did Queen Maria help her country during the time of the Balkan wars 1912-1913?
  - What was her political influence in the Romanian society?
3. Should women who take high positions in politics and government take care of their families too? Should they be able to cook and take care of the household?
4. Should people (men and women) who dedicate themselves to their career be substituted by someone else in the cares for their home?
5. What do you think about women's participation in politics and government?



*Political participation of women was developed only step by step as the following Hungarian example shows*

## 2. Statistics about Women's Participation in the Hungarian Parliament and Governments (1922 - 1994)

Year of Election	Absolut number and Percentage of women deputies in the Parliament (%)	Woman serving as President of the Parliament	Woman serving as a minister	Name of the Ministry
1922	1 Margit Slachta			
1931	1 Anna Kéthly			
1935	2			
1939	2			
1944	12 (2,4%)			
1945	14 (3,3%)			
1947	22 (5,3%)			
1949	71 (17,6%)		1949-1951 Anna Ratkó	Minister of Welfare
1953	52 (17,4%)		1956 Anna Kéthly	State minister
1958	62 (18%)		1958-1961 Valéria Benke	Minister of Culture
1963	62 (18,2%)	1963-1967 Istvánné Vass	1955-1971 Józsefné Vass	Minister of Light Industry
1967	69 (19,7%)			
1971	84 (23,8%)		1971-1980 Keserü Jánosné	Minister of Light Industry
1975	101 (28,6%)			
1980	106 (30,1%)			
1985	80 (20,7%)		1987-1990 Judit Csehák	Minister of Welfare and Health
1990	27 (7%)		1990 Katalin Botos	Minister without Portfolio
1994	43 (11,1,%)		1994-95 Kósáné Kovács Magda	Minister of Labour

Jónás Károly, *Pártpanoptikum 1948-1990*, (Wax Cabinet of Parties), Budapest, 1990.

### Answer the questions:

1. Pay attention to the dynamics of women's participation in the historic development. When do we see the first woman in the Hungarian parliament?

2. What do you remember about Margit Slachta from the text of introduction? What were her convictions?

3. How did her participation enrich political life?

4. When did the share of women in the Hungarian parliament reach its peak?

### How would you explain this?

5. What was the attitude of the communist government toward women's participation in the power structure? How did this influence women's place in society?

6. In what spheres of government did women take the highest positions? Why?

- economy;
- industry;
- social sphere;
- culture;
- agriculture;
- education.

7. Can you imagine a woman in the following positions:

- Prime Minister
- President





Hungary, 1910s

- Defense Minister      - Finance Minister

8. Point out names of women - ministers and members of Parliament in your country. In what spheres do you find them mostly?

*The writer Hristo Silyanov (born in 1880) participated in the movement for the liberation of Macedonia from Ottoman rule at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Later on he worked as a journalist.*

*His memoirs were written as letters to the literature teacher Manya M. who also supported the liberation struggles*

### 3. The letter of a Macedonian chetnik (rebel) to his friend Manya

“You admired the wild life of your brothers and cursed your sex. The thought that you will never be able to get out from the role of a nurse, that you are condemned to put up in your home homeless people, send them shirts and socks [...] this thought cut the wings of

your dreams. And you felt you were born unhappy, stigmatized by fate.

I understood you Manya, I understood you perfectly. I also thought of myself as convicted to be nailed by the city [...] like a tired ox, which is headed towards the slaughterhouse voluntarily [...] Do you think that this thought is less painful for a man than your awareness of the helplessness of a woman?”

From “Letters and confessions of a Macedonian chetnik”, 1928.

#### Answer the questions:

1. What were the social activities of women of that time?

2. Why did the author suppose that the woman was not happy with her sex? Why did he mention the ‘helplessness of a woman’?

3. What did the author mean by “a wild life”?

4. What types of men and women did the author describe?

• Why did the author compare a man who is “nailed by the city” to a “working ox”?



- What stereotypes about gender roles did the author affirm?

- What political movements on the Balkans made use of these stereotypes for their propaganda?

5. Should men and women share the same ideal of behavior?

**Underline the right statements and support your choice:**

The author's ideal of 'manliness' was:

- a man should sacrifice himself for certain ideals;

- a man should be patient;

- a man should live peacefully;

- a man should lead a turbulent life;

- a man should be hardworking;

- a man should be educated;

- a man should be strong and brave;

- a man should be a hero.

*Women in the first half of the 20 century were supposed to take care only for their husbands and children. But there were also women who tried to change these expectations. It wasn't easy for a woman to be politically active in the beginning of the 20 century as far as politics was considered a man business. One of these women was Halide Edip Adivar from Turkey.*

**4. Biography of Halide Edip Adivar (born in 1884) , Turkey**

The renowned novelist who was one of the heroines of the national independence movement, wrote stories which could penetrate to the depths of the human soul and which could excite the reader. Her most famous works are



Halide Edip Adivar

“Sinekli Bakkal”, “Vurun Kahpeye”, “Kalp Agrisi” and “Zeyno’nun Oglu”. She was a prominent intellectual leader during the war for independence, alongside the Kemalist resistance. During the Republican era however, she was critical of the Kemalist policies and had to leave the country and live in exile until she died.

**Answer the questions:**

1. What do you know about the Kemalist revolution in Turkey?

2. What do you know about the situation of women before the Kemalists revolution?

3. How did it change the situation of women?

4. When were the women in Turkey granted the right to vote? Find it in the text of the introduction.

5. What do you think about the emigration of social activists due to political reasons?



#### 4. A Picture, Constantia Lyapcheva and Georgi Dragoev, 1934 (Bulgaria)



Can you describe what is presented on the photo?

**Mark the true statements. Back up your choice:**

- the photo presents a family at home;
- this is a photo of a study /a special room for intellectual activities in one's home/;
- this is a photo of a room in a private house;
- the woman who is sitting on the chair is subordinate to the man
- the man is subordinate to the woman;
- the woman and the man are colleagues discussing their work.

2. Try to make short biographies of the people from the picture based on the scheme:

- family origin;
- education;
- career.

3. Find in the introduction (Women and social care) the name of Constantia Liapcheva.

#### 5. From the article of Dimitrana Ivanova, the "Zhenski Glas" magazine, 1926

"And if the woman - married or single can go to the factories and workshops, offices and state institutions, why can't she become a judge, a lawyer, a member of parliament, a journalist, a technician, a priest, a doctor, a professor, an executive and "what else not"... What right do you have, if she is forced to work, to make her do the dirty work only, to ban her from doing any intellectual work?"

#### Questions:

1. What attitude toward women's work is Dimitrana Ivanova pleading for?
2. Which professions were usual for women in the middle of the 1920s?





Women's demonstration for women's rights, 1910s, Hungary

3. Which professions women were not allowed access to?

4. Write an essay "My future profession".

## 6. A Bulgarian journal "The Woman Today", 1950s

[...] She is like that, the leader of the garden brigade... Yordanka Bitunska. She saves neither labor nor time. Holidays are workdays for her. There were occasions when she even left her guests at home on her Name day feast...

The agronomist of the cooperative farm Ganka Tsoneva smiled: 'Well, you are like fire! You don't sleep a wink! Do you know what? I'll give you my pocket torch. Check the calorimeters in the greenhouse, and if the temperature is +15° C, put the frames and the straw-mat over!'

[...] This morning, as usual, Petrana left for the farm in the dark. In the morning, she can't lie in bed. When the rooster sings she gets up. Cleans the house, makes breakfast for the kids,

puts the pot with the lunch to cook and the gate squeaks silently behind her... Petrana is always in a hurry [...]

### Answer the questions:

1. What were the profession of the women discussed in the texts ?
2. Which of them were leaders?
3. How did they cope with their duties at the work place?
4. Did they keep to their traditional family roles?
5. Were they responsible to their families?
6. What was the communist ideal of "being a real woman" ?
7. What positive changes did socialism bring to women ?
8. What of the old problems socialism was not able to solve?



# Love and Marriage in Communist Society

## Free Love, Communal Family

The Marxist view of love, marriage and sex played a significant role in the history of the Balkan countries after World War II. Just like Freudism, Marxism also neglects entirely the importance of the genetic-biological factors to sex differences and drives and exaggerates the meaning of the political conditions. According to Marxism, the inequality of sexes in the bourgeois society is a result solely of class oppression. The communist ideology promises to workers and peasants that after taking forcefully over the political power they will be able to free society from the century-old institutions of oppression - national state, private property, Christian monogamous marriage. Since economical dependence and social stratification will fall off (all being equal and



Midnight meeting, 1958, Bulgarian movie

*"A film about the young who discovered the meaning of their  
work in the straggle for the good of the people..."*

Man and women were antifascists, party activist, best workers but never just lovers in the official communist art



rich), only love will be decisive for the marital choice. Free communist love meant similarity of characters and political accord. The family will not be a compulsory form of cohabitation of the people in love, and children will be brought up communally and educated by the state so the parents may have more time for their profession and for their social commitments.

### Liberalizing the Legislation

The 1940s - 1950s were marked by the struggle of the new communist states against the bourgeois monogamous family, which lead to liberalization of the legislation in regard to

divorces and abortions; the right of patrimony for children born out of wedlock was acknowledged (even if the fathers had married or remarried); after a divorce the children were not necessarily given to the innocent



Family celebration "First of May", Child textbook, 1970s

part. The only thing forbidden was marriage with a Western foreigner (in Bulgaria up to 1970s). Divorces became ridiculously easy – though not as easy as in the USSR, with postcards, but after a court trial – due to character differences, continuing disagreements, by mutual agreement, etc. Their number rose:

1960	Bulgaria-10 %	Hungary-23 %
1975	Bulgaria-15 %	Hungary-28 %
1985	Bulgaria-21 %	Hungary-33%

Hungary was placed among the 5 countries with the highest divorce rate in the world. To compare, the divorces in bourgeois Turkey in 1983 were 3,6% and in 1991 - 4,7%.

The legislature created conditions for greater freedom in choosing and changing one's spouse, as well as in choosing suitable time and form of maternity. On the other hand, family became more unstable and easy to be controlled: party functionaries started to interfere in most intimate affairs of communist state subjects.

### Communist Welfare State

Communist educators rejected the idea of

Christian feminism that only the family may ensure proper upbringing of children and a campaign for the entire institutionalization of the care for children was

sought: free hospital care, kindergartens, social kitchens, holiday camps, special after-school interest activities were provided. Through the overall communal upbringing and communist education of children the state tried to overcome "the egoism of family upbringing", "the religious delusions" and the other "harmful prejudices" of their parents. 54% of the children between 3-6 years of age in Bulgaria in 1960 were in kindergarten, and in 1975 the number increased up to 75%.



The state protection and education of children took from the parents many of their family responsibilities. Job and lodging, though inadequate in most of the cases, were provided for every citizen. The marital age fell again:



New traktorist is greeted, 1952, Hungary

Year	Country	Average marital age for girls
80s	Romania	15 years;
70s	Hungary	20 years (for 55% of girls)
60s	Bulgaria	21,7 years

The number of children born out of wedlock rose as did the number of children left for upbringing in state children's homes.

The free communal upbringing of children facilitated women's involvement in the accelerated industrialization of the South Eastern countries (by the 1970s the urban population became between 70-90%). Women had new perspectives for professional and social real-

ization. In 1965 92% of the women in Bulgaria had work positions in the state owned companies. The communist propaganda encouraged women's involvement in typically male professions – tractor drivers, crane operators, construction workers – professions, contradicting the bourgeois ideas of womanhood and maternal responsibility. Even today foreigners are impressed by the large number of women working as bus drivers, ticket guards, construction workers.

In spite of the emancipation propaganda everyday life of women was hard. Because of the poor social services and the constant deficit of essential commodities, after the end the workday wives had to stay at endless queues for buying bread and other goods, then they were expected to cook and do the housework - no time was left even to talk to their children.

The price of the communist welfare was the establishment of a total political supervision not only over the religious and professional life of the citizens, but also over their private life. The family problems of workers and employees were discussed at political meetings. The practice of discussing the love affairs of a husband on the request of his wife at party committee meetings which could result in forbidding divorce and even recommending another child to strengthen the family ties was common. In order to get permission for abortion, women were humiliated being questioned about their most intimate problems by special state committees including party activists, colleagues and doctors.

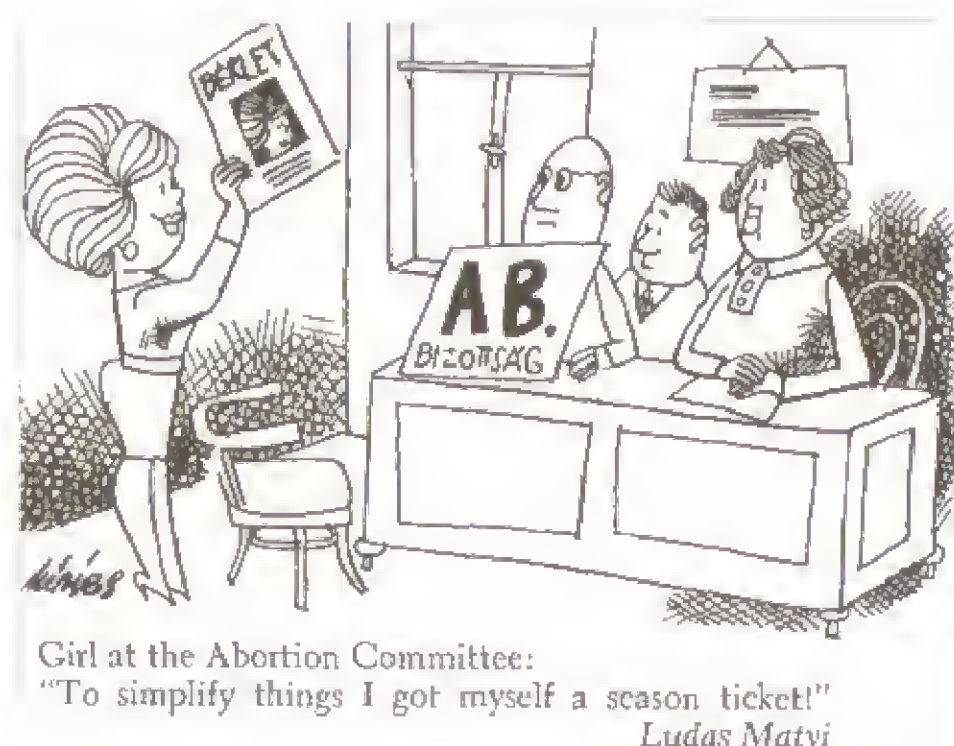
### **Propaganda and Abortion.**

The party-state took over many of the providing and educational functions of the family, but the expectations for an increase in birth rates were not justified. Ever since the 1950s it has been falling down. In 1960 the population growth in Bulgaria had been 17,8 per one thousand, in 1980 – 14,5 per thousand, in 1990



– 12,1. In Slovenia during the 60s and 70s the families had an average of 2,1 children, in Bulgaria during 1975 – 2,9. Both abortions and the number of children born out of wedlock rose.

Abortions in all communist states were le-



Hungary, 1960s

galized and became accessible to everybody. For 30 lei, the price of a bottle of wine, every woman in Romania could stop her pregnancy (from 1957 to 1966). Abortions in Hungary were legalized – first in 1945 because of the numerous cases of rapes by the Soviet soldiers, and in 1952 abortions were permitted after an examination by public committees:

1950	36 000 abortions to 196 206 births
1954	42 029 abortions to 223 000 births
1958	183 00 abortions to 156 500 births

In 1961 abortions were with 20% more than births. In Yugoslavia abortions were legalized later in the 1970s.

What was the reason for the sharp increase of abortions and number of children abandoned by their parents? Except for the weakened sense of personal responsibility and family values because of the communal-atheistic upbringing, another significant reason was the hypocrisy of the official propaganda. Marxism – Leninism was not interested in the biological body and its sexual drives, sexuality

was viewed as a remnant from the “rotten capitalist past” and became a taboo theme. The party functionaries equated sex appeal with Communist appeal: the dedicated to Mother party not drinking, not smoking puritanical male who radiated strength and optimism. The female workers whose true love were party functionaries and who despised tenderness as a decadent capitalist past. The praise of the sexless workers of communism held the young generation in total ignorance in regard to sexual relations.

Birth control pills, condoms, etc. were not advertised, they were hard to get and with poor quality (the rough condoms were called “galosh”). No sexual education was provided. On the other side the communal living at brigades, camps and dormitories away from the parents’ supervision gave youngsters opportunities for uncontrolled sexual activity. During the 1960s more than 20% of the girls in Albania who had taken part in a work brigade got pregnant. The number of children born out of wedlock increased, not because of the mothers’ desire to bring up their children alone, but because of their low sexual culture and irresponsible sexual behavior. In Bulgaria children born out of wedlock in 1960 were 8%, and in 1990 – 12,4%. In 1970 only 6,2% of such mothers wanted to have a child, 72,2% gave their children for upbringing in state homes.

### Sexual Revolution

Despite of the propaganda, the communist state did not manage to win the young people for long – the 60s were years of youth anti Soviet riots and revolts (Hungary and the Czech Republic). Startled by the youth discontent, the Hungarian communist party changed its politics toward sexuality: free love was encouraged instead of free life. In the West the 1960s were also troublesome – it was the time of sexual liberation and human rights struggles. Rock music, jeans, pornography



started to get through the “iron curtain”. The communist elite used the Western liberation movement for their own purposes. The attitude to revolt against all authority, especially



Porcupine, Yugoslavia, 1960s

the authority of schools, youth organizations (the Komsomol, Pioner) and the party made young people accept some myths about themselves and the world, which allowed them to escape from the dull and hypocritical communist reality into the world of despair, anarchy, and irresponsibility. The eroticism in art, the distribution of pornography and the promiscuity of young people was tacitly encouraged.

Since the 70s the youth decadence, the demographic decrease and the rising problems with certain ethnic minority groups, which kept their high birth rate preserving patriarchal patterns, started to frighten communist leaders. In order to encourage marriage and motherhood, they passed laws providing financial support of studying and working mothers, loans with zero interest were given to newly married couples, etc. In 1968 in Bulgaria the maternity leave was increased - from 84 to 120 days for the first child, 150 days for the

second, and 180 for the third child. Mothers received the right to an unpaid leave for up to 6 months, which was acknowledged as service.

In Romania the catastrophic demographic decrease from 25,6 per thousand in 1955 to 14,6 in 1965 led to restriction of abortions – with the only exception of cases of incest, rapes, pregnancy over 45 years of age, etc., and the wrongdoers were sentenced to 10 years in prison. Meanwhile, the use of all contraceptives was banned, as a result of which the state orphanages were filled with unwanted children. After decades of forced social experiments, the ideas of “sacramental monogamous family” and nationalism started to return. However, compared to West European development, they were anachronism.

At the beginning of the century the roles of men and women in South East Europe started to be defined in a much broader way - not only in the terms of the reproduction of the kin and the nation. Today gender is differentiated from the biological sex and sexual orientation: from an inborn identity (with two meanings - man or woman) sex started to be viewed as a social choice on the continuum between the man and the woman allowing individual erotic choice. Today's consumer society offers a variety of possibilities for satisfying one's individual erotic desires, gender roles, and forms of family cohabitation, which does not necessarily mean that the opportunities for equality and mutual understanding between men and women have also increased.



## Sources

### 1. A Partisan Guerrilla's Letter to his Mother (Yugoslavia)

“Greetings, my old woman, and death to fascism! Your partisan, your son and your child, Martin Klen, is writing to you and greeting you...

It's better my darling mama to tell you something good, isn't it? When I'm feeling joyful, I'm singing, God damn it, and the whole mountain echoes. And most often I sing the Zagoriye village song “A spring is gushing up, oh, you black-eyed girl”. This song is always in my heart, although our Milica (a fellow-partisan) has her own opinion, which is not very relevant to my joyfulness and happiness. She says that it is nothing, that there is no use, and so on, and that true songs are the ones that sing about our struggle and freedom. Milica has her right, but I think I'm right too. She is Serbian, from Velyun, she has already

been in our army for 3 years, carrying a gun and a soldier's overcoat, and how black her eyes are – even the soot in our fire is not that black. So, my darling mama, I'm telling you all this to know that I have firmly decided to get married soon. When the war is over and our victory comes I'll get married, but I'm not taking Iagica from Brezic, but another one, a completely different one...”

Ivan Donchevic, Yugoslavian writer, “A letter to a mother in Zagoriye”, Short stories, 1977

#### Answer the questions:

- Why was the partisan writing to his mother, not his father?
- What was his language like?
- What qualities of the beloved one was he stressing?
- Compare them to the patriarchal and bourgeois ideals of womanhood.
- What old ideas did influence the partisan's new attitude to love and marriage?



Meeting Soviet army Monument, Bulgaria



## 2. Female poetry (Yugoslavia)

### Presentiment

I met you when the snow was melting,  
Melting and warm wind was blowing,  
With its closeness the spring exhilarated me,  
I was breathing the light air thirstily,  
I was looking tenderly at your footsteps in  
the white snow,  
And I understood, you'd be darling to me,  
Darling all my life.

Desanka Maksimović, a famous Yugoslavian poet,  
published in the 1920s.

### The speaking of iron

Here I am in an iron ringing garden  
The metal is blazing like blooming poppy  
Burning seed is crackling in the chimney  
Iron nightingales are whispering in thin  
antennas  
Flinches are ringing in the big smoky hall  
Just forged cobras, boas and motley vipers  
Are hissing on the floor.

Desanka Maksimović, published in the 1960s

### Answer the questions:

- What has Desanka Maksimović preserved and what has she changed in her poetic language from 1920s to 1960s
- Which poem do you like more and why?

## 3. Legislature (Bulgaria)

“The woman may reach social freedom and equality only in a world that has rejected oppression of the minority over the majority and has granted all people the goods they have produced... The judicial equality of both sexes is already a fact. Men and women have equal rights and responsibilities as citizens of our state (art. 36 of the Constitution of the People's Republic of Bulgaria)... About the positions women have reached, one may definitely judge by their



Female policewoman with her dog in 1947, Hungary

participation in spheres such as health care (every second doctor is a woman), the technical professions (every third engineer is a woman), science (every third science worker is a woman)... The commitments a woman has in the family take her twice the time it would take a man... Observations show that the bigger load the woman has is connected not only to the upbringing of children, but also to the personal way of living with her husband. This combination of everyday cares for the well-being of the family as a whole, the necessity to create and sustain appropriate conditions at home especially to the husband, make it necessary to insist on one more role of the woman – the function of a wife. This function is put together with the already discussed functions of a mother, a worker and a social person.”

Milanka Vidova, Legislative protection  
of motherhood, Sofia, 1980.



### Answer the questions:

- What was promised to women by the communist state?
- What did the state expect from women?
- Is it possible for every woman to be at one and the same time a caring mother and wife, a devoted social person and an experienced worker? What conditions should be provided? What would be the price?
- Most of the Bulgarian communist leaders come from poor rural families and have got only elementary education. Could you connect this fact to the official expectations about women's duties and rights?

#### 4. An article on the condition of women in South East Europe (Bulgaria, the 1970s)

May be that is why I was really surprised to find out that in some western industrial societies, as in England, for example, the woman is viewed officially as a human being of second quality. Women's work is considered of low value, women's salaries are lower than those of men, no key position is granted to a woman, and it seems that the kingdom of secretaries and housewives is blossoming.

Looking formally, it is not like that in the East. Actually, we have nearly the same attitude. Everyone who has passed along the co-operative blocks has seen that only women work there, men are privileged administrators. Women are working at hard and unhealthy places – to start with the mines and end with the concrete mixers... But what is more offending and cruel is the attitude of men. I still know a lot of people who say “a female” (zhenska) instead of “a woman”. And add to that the vulgar attitude of the male supervisors who consider it their right to take their subordinate women and girls to bed...” The woman is the

best and the cheapest pleasure”, once said to me in a state of drunken honesty one of these comrades.”

Georgi Markov, a Bulgarian dissident writer. “The image of the woman”, “Correspondence reports from Bulgaria”, 1991.

### Tasks:

Interview your parents and relatives:

- What were their professional, social and family duties in the communist state?
- What examples of advantages and respect for women do they remember?
- What examples of discrimination and humiliation of women do they remember?
- Were they advantages or disadvantaged by the post-communist change?

### Write an essay

“The advantages and/or disadvantages of the communist establishment for both women and men.”

### Fill in the mind map:

Women rights	
in theory	in practice
Women duties	
in theory	in practice



Health-educational action for warding off infectious diseases (1945) Cutting children's nails, Macedonia



# У НАС... И У ТЯХ...



Our world and the capitalist one. "Woman today" magazine, 1955, Bulgaria

## 5. Interview with a prostitute

(Budapest, Hungary, 1966)

"We have lost faith in everything: in old-fashioned religion, in the capitalist order, in socialism, in communism. Everything turned out to be lies. God did not help us when I was thirteen and a Russian soldier raped me in the cellar – and then took the ring my parents gave me for my first communion. The so cold "free world" did not lift a finger to help us in 1956 when a little unity, a little firmness, would have freed us. And Communism's lies are shown up everyday. What is left? Whatever I can taste and touch, eat and drink; the pleasure my body can give and the pleasure a man can give me. And that is quite enough"

In: "Sexual behavior in the communist world",  
P. Stafford, 1967

## Answer the questions:

1. What did the girl mean by "communist lies"?
2. What were the reactions of the Western governments and people to the political revolts in communist countries?
3. Could you explain the connection between the political violence (war, revolution) and sexual violence (rape)? Look for some examples in literature and movies.
4. Why does the lack of social perspectives and common values lead to sexual promiscuity?

## 6. An anthropological observation and a partisan story (Yugoslavia, the 1940s)

"In Yugoslavia the partisan guerilla is still a king and hero. Almost every film, book, every other statue or painting glorifies him – the fighter for freedom and independence, the guerrilla



warrior who overcome terrific odds and in the end drives out the invader. Much of the guerilla mythology is overdone and exaggerated...

“During those six months we (communist partizans) raided this town twelve times ... One of my Guerillas took special pleasure in making the chetnik (collaborator to German army) captain jump out of his bed in his nightshirt or even without it and run for his life, while he took his place in the conjugal bed and gave a wife a pleasurable time”.

A story of a Serb partisan commander. In: Sexual behavior..., 1967.

### Answer the questions:

1. What did the commander mean by “gave a wife pleasurable time”? Whose “please” was he talking about?

2. What is the connection between the cult to the heroic armed man and the practice of using sexual violence against women as political revenge?

3. The violence against women takes different forms in different times and situations. Could you count some of the more open or closed forms of violence in the past and today?

## 7. Popular joke (Hungary, 1970s)

An old lady visiting a doctor, asked for birth control pills, got prescription, two weeks later:

“What do you want?” - asks the doctor.

“Another prescription – the same pills.”

“But ma’am, why do you need so many at your age?”

“They make me sleep so well.”

“For goodness sake ... these are not sleeping pills!”

“Sure they are. Every evening I give one to my daughter, who is eighteen. And then I sleep the soundest sleep.”

### Comment:

This joke is connected with the atmosphere of sexual promiscuity, established in Eastern Europe after the anticommunist youth insurrection in 60s. “Give them (youngsters) plenty of prostitutes and they will forget about politics.” This was the personal advice of Matiash Rakoci, Hungarian communist leader, to editors and publishers.

### Underline the correct answers:

- The joke is ridiculing:
  - The sexual freedom of young people;
  - The irresponsible behavior of young people;
  - The excessive cares of mothers;
  - The common sense of mothers;
  - The lack of sexual education in communist society.
- Whose responsibility should it be if a girl gets pregnant?
  - the girl's
  - the girl's and her boy friend's
  - the girl's/boy's parents'
  - the society's

### Task:

Ask you parents and relatives of other jokes from the communist times connected to love and family life.

## 8. Autobiographical interview of a woman born in the 1950s

(Bulgaria)

My father died when I was 19 years old. I would not say I miss him and that it is a bad memory for me, because he had not lived with us anyway, and was a rather repulsive person. An alcoholic and a rake, he left my mother when I was born. He got together with some woman from a village near Plovdiv (big Bulgarian town)... He came to see me from time to time, but nearly every time he drank heavily





Orphanage, Romania

(Counsel of World Churches, Geneva, archives)

and started to torment my mother. He abused her and sometimes beat her. Then, I think it was in 1967, I was 13 years old, when I took a serious decision for the first time in my life and I chose him away. I told him that I don't want to see him anymore, and that I'll kill him if he steps into this house again. I finished 8<sup>th</sup> grade in 1979, to tell you the truth, I didn't want to study very much...(in 1982 she gets married and lives in Sofia).

.... I called my husband in the bedroom to show him the letter, and he hit me because he said he knew what it was all about. After that he hit me again and I fell on the bed. He called me a whore, stupid, he told me that he has never loved me and wonders why he has married me at all. He hit me, it hurt a lot. While he was swearing and beating me, his friend came to see what was going on. At the same time Ivan took off my clothes and raped me... I will lie if I say I haven't slept with shabby men... After that gradually I entered into narrower circles where the cream

of the scum was, being they politicians, members of parliament, artists and cheats, all the ones about whom nothing is known, everything is deeply covered."

Oral interview, 1991

**Mark the true statements. Back up your choice.**

What were the reasons for this girl to become a prostitute?

- Violence in the family –alcoholic father and abandoned mother
- The girl herself – her unwillingness to study and work
- The husband of the girl and other men profiting from organized prostitution
- The crisis of the family in the communist state
- Hopeless future
- Psychological problems of the girl
- Self-hatred and the feeling of being defiled
- Wrong ideals
- Lack of social education



## 9. Essay, Slavenka Drakulić, Croatia

To avoid uniformity, you have to work very hard: you have to bribe a salesgirl, wait in line for some imported product, buy blue jeans on the black market and pay your whole month's salary for them; you have to hoard cloth and sew it, imitating the pictures in glamorous foreign magazines. What makes these enormous efforts touching is the way women wear it all, so you can tell they went to the trouble. Nothing is casual about them. They are overdressed, they put on too much makeup, they match colors and textures badly, revealing their provincial attempt to imitate Western fashion. But where could they learn anything about a self-image, a style? In the party-controlled magazines for women, where they are instructed to be good workers and party members first, then mothers, housewives, and sex objects next, — never themselves? To be yourself, to cultivate individualism, to perceive yourself as an individual in a mass society is dangerous...

For us, the pictures in a magazine like "Vogue" were much more important we studied their every detail with the interest of those who had no other source of information about the outside world. We tried to decode them, to read their message. And because we were inexperienced, enough to read them literally, the message that we absorbed was that the other world was a paradise. Our reading was wrong and naive, nevertheless, it stayed in the back of our minds as a powerful force, an inner motivation, a dormant desire for change, an opportunity to awaken. The producers of these advertisements, Vance Packard's



Slavenka Drakulić

'hidden persuaders,' should sleep peacefully because here, in communist countries, their dream is coming true: people still believe them, women especially. What do we care about the manipulation inherent in the fashion and cosmetic industries? To tell us they are making a profit by exploiting our needs is like warning a Bangladeshi about cholesterol.

S. Drakulić, famous feminist journalist.

How we survived communism and even laughed. 1991

### Answer the questions:

1. Why make up and fashion were so important for women in communist states?
2. Did women succeed in their strive for style and individuality?
3. Was make up and fashion in communist state a question of personal choice or politics?
4. What are fashion magazines all about?

Selling goods to women; Developing sense of style and beauty; Informing about cloth industry; Offering women an escape from reality, Affirming the stereotypes of women as beautiful and sensual "objects".



**WOMEN AND MEN  
IN THE PAST**

**19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Century**

*Additional Teaching Materials for Secondary Schools*

*English language translator: Elena Ruseva, Eli Bojadzhieva*

*English language editor: Ivanichka Nestorova*

*Design and lay out:*

Nurie Muratova

*Printed by:*

Art Print Blagoevgrad,

tel.: 00359 73 8 08 37,

e-mail: krompet@avala.bg

ISBN 954-680-197-6





Approaching the history of gender relations in South East Europe, we would rather try to outline the common problems of people of Eastern countries than to present different national traditions. We put greater emphasis on the things that connect men and women - love, profession, and human dignity - than on the ones opposing them. Ideals of being "true" male and being "true" female vary in different social groups and change in the course of time. We behave "like a man" or "like a woman" not so much because of our biological specifics but because of certain social expectations and established traditions.